

BALLARD BLESSINGS

December 2020



2006 NW 65th Street, Seattle, WA 98117 • 206.784.1306 • www.bflcs.org • A Reconciling in Christ Community

Dear Friends in Christ,

December 1, 2020

2020. What a year.

I recently received an electronic reminder of an event that was scheduled to take place this past November 30. Except the reminder indicated that the event was to take place on November **40**. Now, I know that 2020 has felt like a very long and fearful year. So, I fired back a clarifying text that suggested, “I think you meant to say November **30**.” I wasn’t surprised when the sender replied, saying something like, “Yeah, that was a typo. I don’t want to add one more day to this stinker of a year.” I know the sender is not the only person who has sighed or muttered that, “2020 can’t end fast enough.” What a year.

There is no need for me to catalogue for you those things that have tempted people away from hope in the Year of Our Lord that is 2020. For some, it is even a stretch to call 2020 “the year of *Our Lord*.” Things are pretty bad when we start speculating about whether or not even Jesus would claim this wretched year. I’m not willing to go quite that far, but I definitely understand the sentiment. *Poor old 2020, the year only Jesus could love.*

When I was young, I often expressed impatience while waiting for highly anticipated days to arrive sooner (and here I am thinking of such things as the last day of school before summer vacation, or a special upcoming trip). I was similarly impatient when longing for difficult days to come to an end more quickly (like, for example, the last days before those braces would finally come off my teeth). My dad was not very sympathetic. “Don’t wish your life away,” was his wise counsel. I have tried to heed those words. But 2020 has certainly put them to the test. What a year.

Another Advent is upon us. Ah, yes. Advent. “The church’s *New Year*.” Advent, *The season of Hope*, as we like to say. With a capital “H.” And so we decorate the church with paraments that are blue, the color of Hope at least according to Scandinavian lore. This Covid year, as days grow short and shadows lengthen, we light Advent candles once again, insisting on Hope, daring to Hope in spite of so much evidence to the contrary. Come to think of it, as definitions of the word, “Faith,” go, that’s not half bad: “*Daring to Hope in spite of evidence to the contrary.*” Or, to paraphrase my dad: Rather than wish the difficult days of 2020 away, Advent invites us to Hope our way through these days.

Here’s a scenario for you. Let’s pretend that the year 2020 is a person. And let’s imagine further that 2020 got arrested and charged with the crime of murder, of killing Hope. I think many of us would agree that the DA would have a mountain of evidence and a list of witnesses a mile long willing to testify against 2020 in a court of law. In my mind’s eye, this would play out as one of those legal dramas. You know the ones. Just when it seems like the defendant is about to go down for the crime, the defense calls a last-minute, surprise witness. That witness, of course, is us, the church. And boy, do we ever have a lulu of a story to tell the jury: *Hope is still alive.*

That makes all of the difference. Rather than curse these fearful days, we testify to the truth that Hope is still alive. Still, there is no candy-coating it. These *are* fearful days. We can’t wish them away. But our faith empowers us to meet these fearful times with Hope as our companion. The yuletide carol is as true today when the words were first composed: “The hopes and fears of all the years” once met in that little town of Bethlehem are now met on our

mean streets and fields of social battle. The Christmas task of maintaining our Hope in the prospect of “peace and good will” to all is as contemporary and urgent as ever. Can you think of a time when you ever longed to sing a message of *joy to the world* more than now? I strain to. Can you think of a time when you needed to hear more than now the news that Hope’s demise has been greatly exaggerated? I can’t. Can you think of a time when you ever more needed to be assured that Hope lives among us, *joyful and triumphant*? Do we dare even dream that Emmanuel is real? That God is with us?

Here’s hoping....Pastor Erik W2

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all. - Emily Dickinson

WE CONTINUE TO WORSHIP

Gather for Sunday worship every week by “tuning in” to the virtual service found **online on the website www.bflcs.org or on our YouTube Channel: Ballard First Lutheran Church – Seattle.** https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ballard+first+lutheran+church++seattle.

Journey of Hope: An Advent Opportunity

On two Advent Wednesdays, the church will be open on a limited basis for people who feel they can safely take a walk through the building in order to view displays in the narthex and balcony as well as to take a few moments to be in the candle-lit sanctuary to pray and hear sacred readings and music. We anticipate that this “**Journey of Hope**” will last between fifteen minutes and a half hour at most. Participants are required to telephone (206-784-1306) or email the church office (office@bflcs.org) in order to register as individuals or households for this event that is scheduled to take place from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the Wednesdays of December 9 and 16. Time slots will be made available on the quarter hour on a first-come, first served basis. Senior citizens and people with compromised health are discouraged from attending. Please note that this event could be subject to cancellation should circumstances related to the pandemic change.

Christmas Worship

While we will not offer in-person worship this Christmas, a virtual **Christmas Festival Service** will be posted on the church’s website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel. Combining some of the beloved traditions of the several worship experiences offered at Christmas at BFL, you can look forward to the music of the season from the BFL choir and musicians as well as a special appearance by our good friend, John Johnson. We plan to post the service by 4:00 p.m.* on Thursday, December 24, Christmas Eve and it will remain up and available whether you choose to observe Christmas worship early in the evening, at the traditional late hour, or in the light of Christmas Day on Friday, December 25!

Additionally, a **Service of Lessons and Carols in English and Norwegian** will be posted on the church’s website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel at 10:00 a.m.* on the First Sunday of Christmas, December 27. God jul og godt nytt år! (Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!)

Remember that Christmas is 12 days long and doesn’t even technically **begin** until December 25. This year, that means that there will be two Sundays in the Christmas Season. Join us on the Second Sunday of Christmas, on January 3 as we continue to ponder the mystery of the Word made flesh, come to dwell among us, full of grace and truth.

A Service of Remembrance in Epiphany

Each year, our sister congregation, **the Church of Steadfast Love**, observes a **Service of Remembrance** for those people who have died on our Seattle Streets. As of this writing on December 1, the number already exceeds one hundred and fifty people. This year, Ballard First Lutheran is hosting the service with help from area congregations and service agencies. It will actually occur in our regular Sunday morning time slot on Sunday, January 10, at 10:00 a.m. on the church’s website, Facebook page, and YouTube channel. Every life is precious in the eyes of God. Let it be so with us.

WE CONTINUE TO GATHER

DO YOU MISS COFFEE HOUR? JOIN US ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20TH!



You can still grab a cup of coffee and visit with your fellow congregants! On the third Sunday of each month, we will host ZOOM coffee hour. It's a great opportunity to see each other face-to-face.
See you on December 20th!

Time: Dec 20, 2020 11:30 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93260661664?pwd=ZVUzNkR1bWxqTGFvQVBkQ21zKzdIZz09>

Meeting ID: 932 6066 1664

Passcode: 343742

WE CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE ADVENT



Labyrinth Open for Prayer and Quiet Time

The Labyrinth in the Cross and Crown Room will be open for prayer and quiet time during Advent. The scheduled hours are Monday evenings 5:30 to 7:30 and Tuesday afternoons 1:00 to 4:00. Please call the BFL office at (206) 784-1306, to make a reservation. COVID protocols will be followed, including only one household per time slot and cleaning between visitors.

WE CONTINUE TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS



Poinsettias for Christmas This Christmas, we will again be purchasing poinsettias to adorn our worship space. The suggested donation is \$15.00 and the deadline is Sunday, December 20th.

This year, all proceeds from the sale of poinsettias will be given to the Ballard Food Bank. The Food Bank is experiencing a severe increase in the number of people needing their services.

Please send in this order form or contact the church office.

I (We) would like to order _____ poinsettias at \$15.00 each.

In memory of: _____

In thanksgiving for: _____

Your name: _____ Phone #: _____

Enclosed is a check or cash in the amount of: \$_____

WE CONTINUE TO NEED YOUR SUPPORT

November Financial Report General Fund

| | November Actual | November Budget | Year To Date Actual | Year To Date Budget | Year To Date Variance |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Envelope/Loose Giving | \$22,787.06 | \$44,753.35 | \$255,779.03 | \$297,760.45 | (\$41,981.42) |
| Other Income | \$8,310.15 | \$7,611.66 | \$125,079.12 | \$136,418.26 | (\$11,339.14) |
| Total Income | \$31,097.21 | \$52,365.01 | \$380,858.15 | \$434,178.71 | (\$53,320.56) |
| Expenses | \$37,742.80 | \$43,259.64 | \$431,333.81 | \$491,395.24 | (\$60,061.43) |
| Surplus / (Loss) | (\$6,645.59) | \$9,105.37 | (\$50,475.66) | (\$57,216.53) | \$6,740.87 |
| Cash Balance | \$18,793.49 | | | | |
| Savings Balance | \$ 283,809.40 | | | | |

The work of the church has continued and will continue by God's grace and with your help.

How to give: Online: www.bflcs.org/give.html

By check: made out to Ballard First Lutheran Church and mailed to
2006 NW 65th St
Seattle, WA 98117

WE CONTINUE TO VALUE COMMUNITY

Online Chat & Craft the second Wednesday of the month, from 5:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Next gathering will be Wednesday, December 9th. Bring any crafts you've been working on and catch up with your BFL friends! Crafting is *not* a requirement, by the way – all are welcome to join in and share how you're doing, what you're up to, and get together online for some community.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93957189770?pwd=ck8vQWxoM3hSWi9TZXJ2b2tZeis4Zz09>

Meeting ID: 939 5718 9770

Passcode: 817370

YOUTH AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Youth Activities: Virtual Coffee Wednesday continues to be held every Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.! This is a time of fellowship and fun for our youth between the ages of 6th to 12th grade. If you'd like to join us, the link is below!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92039039334?pwd=ZGRYdEwxWGIYUVY2NDczbVdYTDZiUT09>

Meeting ID: 920 3903 9334

Passcode: LYONS

Youth Virtual Christmas Party Join Pastor Elise for a night of fun, food, and carols! Our virtual Christmas party will take place on December 20th at 7 pm! Please RSVP to Pastor Elise no later than 5 pm December 17th so she can arrange a delivery of goodies for the party! You can RSVP by texting or calling her at (803) 944-7006 or by emailing her at pastorelise@bflcs.org. A zoom link will be sent out closer to the date!

Christian Education Our Sunday school program for children ages 2 years old to 6th grade continues with virtual Sunday school via Zoom on the first Sunday of every month and with lesson plans being sent out to families for the other Sundays in the month! If there are any children in your life (grandchildren, god-children, nieces, nephews, or family friends) that you'd like to be included, please send Pastor Elise their email addresses so that they can be included on the weekly emails for Sunday school! All are welcome!



The Project Phoenix Pod (P2Pod) continues to welcome students – smoothly running now for six weeks!

Currently five middle-school youth attend Haavik Hall three days each week to do their schoolwork. The mostly-quiet atmosphere is punctuated with activity breaks and games and outdoor activities. On Wednesdays, Pastor Elise meets with the Pod for some in-person faith-based discussion just before all join other Ballard First youth for a Zoom check-in.

Newly arrived in November is a HEPA-certified air filter and purifier, which runs at all times when the Pod is in operation. This ensures a complete scrubbing and changeover of air in the workspace twice an hour, giving all a greater peace of mind as the students occupy Haavik Hall. The Pod continues to meet all the mandated public health guidelines for the gathering space.

The P2Pod is still eager to welcome new participants! If you are interested in learning more, or are interested in having your student participate in the school pod, please email Project Phoenix board president Jeff Powers (projectphoenixboard@gmail.com) or pod guide Kevin Peterson (podguide@roaringlyons.org).

Thank you for your continued prayers and support!

STEWARDSHIP

After the uncertainty of the last nine months, we are now in the more familiar time of Advent, awaiting the birth of Jesus. In the December issue of *Living Lutheran*, Karoline M. Lewis writes about Advent as living in Mary's time in expectation of her baby's birth. A time between "how can this be?" and "nothing will be impossible with God."

Mary wondered "How can this be?" at the onset of her pregnancy and we wonder "How can this be?" at the events of the last several months. Mary didn't know how the story would unfold, but she came to trust that "nothing will be impossible with God." We do not know how the story of 2020 will unfold in the years to come. We may need to, or have to, occupy this in-between space for a while longer.

There is no going back to normal. As Ms. Lewis writes, "Mary knew that as well. She realized this truth as she found herself between who she thought God was and

who God needed her to be." We are also in that time between.

Christmas reminds us that the normal we create isn't the normal God wishes for us. Advent is waiting for our world to be change.

Will we lean into God's possibility while not fully understanding what it means for us or the world? How will you be part of the change?

In Peace, Ann Maki

Note-- I paraphrased only one point of Karoline M. Lewis's article "Living in Mary's Time", found in the December 2020 issue of Living Lutheran. I highly recommend reading the entire article.

WE CONTINUE TO STUDY

Last 2020 Bible Study Zoom "In the Wilderness"
Wednesday, December 9th at noon

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/94261056869?pwd=TVZ1blk2aHdFSVpEZlJ3MHYwSjg2dz09>

Meeting ID: 942 6105 6869

Passcode: 154797

WE CONTINUE TO PRAY

For those with health issues . . .

Jesse and Stella
Karl Bergstrom
Bob Grindeland
William Hare
Catherine Lenox,
Janet McKee
Colin Manderson
Josie Maris

Vonn Metts
Jocelyn Schadt Meyer
Robin Ristow
Jerry Shierk

For those who have died and for their families . . . :

Gwen Fisher
Richard Hutchison
Bill Jenson
Everett Metts
Monica Porter

Carole Underhill
Bob Torrey

As we rejoice with: . . . :

Blessings to Carolyn Peterson and Jerome Villegas, celebrating their marriage on Saturday, October 10th.

Thanksgiving for the birth of Simone Lee, daughter of former Vicar Joshua Sullivan and Madelyn Robertson, born on Wednesday, October 14th.

WE CONTINUE TO CARE – DECEMBER I CARE FOR BALLARD FOOD BANK

December I CARE will support the Ballard Food Bank. As the Covid-19 health crisis continues, the Ballard Food Bank is a necessary resource for the community. The Food Bank has experienced nearly double the number of deliveries and visits. In the 2019 calendar year, there were 39,488 food bank visits and deliveries; we anticipate 60,000 in 2020. Our community has never been more challenged by a crisis that is impacting each of us.

Send a check with I CARE designated in the memo line, or go to www.bflcs.org/give.html to give online - just make sure to put the amount on the I CARE line.

THERE CONTINUES TO BE NEED IN OUR COMMUNITY

FAMILIES & SMALL GROUPS NEEDED - Your family and your closest group of friends (COVID POD) can help support **Food Lifeline's** effort to provide food to our communities. Food Lifeline needs volunteers to help distribute emergency food boxes to various locations or pack food in their warehouse. In recent years, members of Ballard First Lutheran have volunteered at Food Lifeline as part of **God's Work, Our Hands Day of Service**. However, the pandemic has made it difficult to coordinate a large volunteer group to help at the warehouse. But we shouldn't let that deter us from lending a hand, which families and small groups can. Please visit foodlifeline.org to learn how. Many dates and locations are available. Volunteers must be 14 years and older. Masks are required and there is plenty room to practice social distancing.

URBAN REST STOP – The Urban Rest Stop is in need of hand and foot warmers and socks. Items can be dropped off at the church office or directly at the Urban Rest Stop, 2014B NW 57th St in Ballard.

The Urban Rest Stop provides a clean, safe and welcoming facility where individuals and families experiencing homelessness can come and use restrooms, laundry facilities and shower. All services are provided at no cost to patrons.

WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OTHERS – READ-A-RAMA

Think back to the very first time you were transported through a favorite book. Maybe it was a book that brought you into another world full of magical creatures, or maybe brought you around the globe to another story far away from your own. Whatever the case may be, remember that consumed feeling you had? The urge to take the book everywhere--on the bus, to the dinner table, into bed? In a world with many other distractions and methods of entertainment, that is the feeling that Camp Read-a-Rama creates.

Two newsletters ago, we sent out a list of equity-minded programs who are making a difference in these times we are living in. Read-a-Rama was not on the list. However, it definitely should have been. And it is in your own backyard.

The Read-a-Rama program was developed by our Ballard First Lutheran member, Dr. Michelle Martin, in South Carolina in 2001. In 2009, she teamed up with Dr. Rachelle D. Washington, and together they have created what Camp Read-a-Rama® is today: a series of day camps offered to students ages 4-11 and 12-17 where programming is fun, engaging, and centered around children's books and literacy immersion experiences.

Because of the pandemic, Read-a-Rama developed online story time, offering 25 story times between March 25 and June 30. This fall, Michelle has continued offering Read-a-Rama Story Time every Wednesday at 4 pm. These are free, interactive, fun, and open to children and families, but librarians and teachers are encouraged to join in to get new ideas. Read-a-Rama has also recently developed E-Camps, two-hour programs one Saturday per month that will feature nationally-known authors and storytellers.

You can learn more about the Read-a-Rama programs on their website: www.Read-a-Rama.org . There, their vision statement is very clear:

Read-a-Rama is a non-profit that uses books for children and young adults as the springboard for all program activities. We provide fully-engaged programming year-round that seeks to improve literacy, particularly for children most in need of literacy intervention.

Last summer, I had the privilege of spending some time at a Read-a-Rama camp. There, I observed children from all over Seattle become enthused by master teachers, expert academics, and inspiring facilitators who all cared deeply that every child should have the chance to be excited about reading. We played games, did indoor and outdoor projects, sang songs, took field trips, and above all, celebrated books! Can you imagine— book camp where children can just be excited about reading and exposed to incredible children's literature? Dr. Martin says that the goal of Camp Read-a-Rama is to teach kids to “live books.”

If you tend to like to donate to organizations close to your heart and your home—this is one you will not want to overlook. Later this year, Read-a-Rama will be one of our “I Care” offerings. However, you can always be a financial supporter of Read-a-Rama and of Michelle's incredible work in our own community. For more information visit their website: www.Read-a-Rama.org .

Thank you, Michelle, for the work you are doing for the children of Seattle.

- Molly Barnes

Enjoy two additional Articles on the Read-a-Rama program:

<https://ischool.uw.edu/news/2019/10/read-rama-branches-out-spokane-library>

https://wala.memberclicks.net/assets/Alki_November_2019_Final.pdf (pages 18-21)

CHILDCARE CENTER



As we celebrate the holiday season with Thanksgiving, Christmas and with the New Year upon us, we acknowledge the changes in public policy surrounding COVID and the holidays. We thank the Childcare families for their continued diligence in making sure we are keeping as safe as possible. We look forward to the day when we won't have to be so careful, when we can return to the traditional holiday celebrations that we treasure. Hopefully in making a sacrifice this year, we'll have a delightful time next year.

God's Blessings, Ms. Karen