

“Growing in Faith, Making a Difference, Open to All”

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-14)

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Since the most recent terror attacks, there’s been a renewed conversation about refugees in our nation. The topic has dominated the airwaves, news outlets, and social media. As Christians looking to respond faithfully to this issue, we can turn to the scriptures for guidance.

After the birth of Jesus, after the angels and the shepherds departed, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were forced to flee to Egypt. They went there to escape the violence of Herod, a man ruled by hate and extremism, who was seeking to kill the newly born Savior.

In the earliest part of his life, **Jesus was a refugee**.

What would have happened if Egypt had turned the family away?

Not only was Jesus a refugee, he tells us that **he is present and found with refugees**. Check it out:

‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous shall answer him, ‘Lord, when was it we saw you hungry and gave you food...and when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you?’ And the king shall answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these...you did it to me.’ (Matt. 25:35-40)

Jesus reveals that God cares for the least, lost, and vulnerable. He reached out to those who were forgotten and marginalized. He put his own well-being and comfort at risk in order to love and serve those in need.

We would be hard pressed to find someone in *greater* need than refugees. Refugee levels today are at the highest level ever recorded, and they include 4 million Syrians. Each day Syrian people are tortured, bombed, and killed. Some of them are Christians being persecuted for their faith. They are fleeing with their families from violence and war, and like Mary and Joseph, escape is their only hope.

How can we in good conscience, and as people of faith, turn them away?

Last year the ELCA Conference of Bishops stated that, “The treatment of immigrants is a core religious value. To welcome the stranger is to welcome a child of God.” God told the Israelites repeatedly to love and to welcome the stranger, remembering that they too were once strangers, slaves, and immigrants in a foreign land. (Genesis 12:10, 27:4; Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19)

continued...

Lutherans have a strong history of caring for and welcoming refugees. After World War II, one out of every six Lutherans worldwide was a refugee, and Lutherans in the U.S. resettled 57,000 people. After Saigon fell in 1975, we sponsored over 50,000 refugees from Southeast Asia. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) is one of nine national organizations that resettle refugees on behalf of the U.S. Government, and we've served and welcomed more than half a million in all, including 11,198 in 2014.

We've done so because we believe that when we see refugees, we are seeing Jesus.

In light of everything happening in our world, it's natural to be afraid. Yet as people of faith, we must not be ruled by fear or fall prey to fear mongering. We cannot let fear rob us of our compassion or our identity as God's people. We cannot vilify people who are in desperate need of our help.

In the midst of our fear, there are a few good things for us to remember:

- **The overwhelming and vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists.** They are our neighbors, and they are just as appalled by the violence as everyone else. These neighbors are in need of our support as they face discrimination and hate, even in our area and city.
- **Refugees undergo an extensive screening process.** It involves security checks, interviews, and six governmental agencies. Refugees face the most vigorous process of anyone coming to the United States, one that is so exhaustive it usually takes 12-16 months to complete.
- **Loving people always involves risk.** While we *should* work to minimize risk and ensure safety, after doing so we must not allow that risk to keep us from loving and serving others. Jesus calls us not just to love others when it's easy, but to love others when it's difficult.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, let us remember the whole story. Not just the beautiful birth, but also the events that happened next, stretching from a manger in Bethlehem to a panicked escape to Egypt. Let's open our hearts and homes to Jesus, and to the ones he calls us to love and serve.

For when we see refugees, we are seeing Jesus. May we make room in the inn.

Your co-worker in Christ,



Pastor Josh ☺

Sources:

www.lirs.org (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service)

www.bishopmike.com (blog of Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod Bishop Michael Rinehart)

www.elca.org (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

ELCA Social Statement, "A Message on Immigration," 1997

"ELCA Statement on U.S. Response to Refugee Resettlement," Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Nov 19

Letter from Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania, Nov 17

Letter to the Editor, Philadelphia Inquirer, ELCA SEPA Synod Bishop Claire Burkat, Nov 2

GROWING IN FAITH

This month in Worship

- Sunday, January 3 (*Second Week of Christmas*) - Our readings this morning are full of the most incredible news. In Ephesians, Paul says that "God chose us." (Eph. 1:4) In the beginning part of the Gospel of John, the writer says that we "become children of God" - not because of *our* will or decision, but because of *God's* choice. (John 1:12-13) This is the heart of the Gospel: that God chooses us, and it's this decision (and not our own) which makes us God's children now and always. (Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, Ephesians 1:3-14, John 1:10-18)

- Sunday, January 10 (*Baptism of our Lord*) - "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you," God says in this morning's reading from the prophet Isaiah. We remember these words as Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan, because this is what happens in baptism: when we pass through the waters, God is with us. In the baptismal waters, God calls us each by name, and makes us a part of God's people forever. What does this mean? "Do not be afraid, I am with you." (Readings: Isaiah 43:1-7, Acts 8:14-17, Luke 3:15-22)

- Sunday, January 17 (*Second Sunday in Epiphany*) - Turning water into wine was the very first of Jesus' public miracles. Performing this miracle meant that the hosts weren't embarrassed when the wine ran out, the guests could continue to party, and joy could continue to spread. John calls this miraculous event a "sign" - but a sign of *what*? Because of Christ, all those things that plague and distress our world and our lives will one day pass away, and only joy will flow. God saves the best things for last. (Readings: Isaiah 62:1-5, Psalm 36:5-10, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, John 2:1-11)

- Sunday, January 24 (*Third Sunday in Epiphany*) - As the prophet Ezra gathered all the people around, the scriptures were read. The book of Nehemiah tells us that, "they read the book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read." God has given us the Bible to bless, guide, teach, and reveal Jesus to us, but often it feels unclear or confusing as we read it. *How* we interpret the Bible is one of the most pressing faith issues of our time, and in worship this morning we'll consider how we can grow in our own understanding

and study of God's word. (Nehemiah 8:1-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a, Luke 4:14-21)

- Sunday, January 31 (*Fourth Sunday in Epiphany*) - We've heard the words of 1 Corinthians 13 many times, but God invites us to take a deeper look. Paul writes that we can be wise, brilliant, powerful, rich, affluent, creative, and anything else - but if we don't have love, all of that amounts to *nothing*. This teaches us what is really important in life, and it summons us to be humble in our own expressions of faith. (Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10, Psalm 71:1-6, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Luke 4:21-30)

Bible Study

Our Friday afternoon Bible study will continue to meet during the month of January as we study the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. You're invited to join us for a time of faith and fun on Friday, January 15th and Friday, January 29th, 12:00-1:30pm. No matter how much experience you have studying the Bible (even if you've never cracked it open!), our group is excited to welcome you. See you there!

Youth Group

As we do each month, our Youth Group will meet on the third Sunday of the month. We'll gather on Sunday, January 17th at 5:00pm for dinner, fun, and faith together. At this meeting we'll spend some time talking about Islam and what we're seeing in the news, we'll add handprints to the Youth Room wall, and start talking about our upcoming retreat(s). All Youth and friends in grades 6-12 are invited to join in the fun!

Confirmation

During December, two of our Youth began the journey towards being confirmed as adult members of our faith! Please pray for our students and teachers as they study and learn about the 10 Commandments this month. Our class will gather this month on Sunday, January 10th and Sunday, January 24th, 12:00-1:30pm.

Sunday School

We've had so many students in Sunday School recently, and it's been AWESOME! Moms and dads, please note that we *won't* have Sunday School on Sunday, January 3rd and Sunday, January 17th this month. We're excited to have our children in worship with us, and it's okay if they get a little loud or antsy - Pastor Josh does too sometimes! The last Sunday of this month will be our congregational meeting, and we're planning to have a fun movie ready for our students so that parents can attend the meeting.

What does the future hold for Holy Trinity?

Want to help decide?

Council members are needed beginning in January 2016 to help make important decisions regarding the church's direction. Council meets once a month, usually the second Wednesday of the month, at 6:30 PM in the CLC to discuss wide-ranging and important topics like:

- Growing and developing Christian Education programs like Bible Study and Sunday School;
- The care and keeping of our church building and grounds;
- What our investment in the Giving Garden and other social ministries looks like in the coming years;
- Cultivating a relationship with Kids Korner, the daycare downstairs;
- How Holy Trinity will give back to the communities of Lower Merion, Narberth, Philadelphia and beyond.

The healthiest Council will have representatives from all of Holy Trinity's different constituencies: young and old, Narbs and Nearbs, choir singers and Sunday School teachers.

Would you like to add your voice to our energetic council? See a Council member today or reach out to the office or Pastor Josh.

Current Council Members: Mary Williamson, President; Alan Herold, Vice President; Kristine DelMonte, Secretary; Kim Crews-Engelhart, Rob Folk, Aaron Simms.

Youth and Kids Today

I was a teenager in the 1980s.

When a boy called my house he had to ask one of my parents if he could speak with me, and I had to pull the cord as far as it would go in order to have a private conversation in the middle of my busy home. We'd heard of computers – those dot-matrix things – but didn't have one in the house until I was halfway through college. The idea of a "smart phone" would have sounded like something out of a galaxy far, far away. To communicate with friends we either talked to them (face to face!!) or passed neatly folded paper notes right under the bio teacher's nose.



I am thankful I was a teenager in the 1980s.

Today's youth are bombarded with challenges and temptations in old-fashioned ways like being offered alcohol or drugs at a party or struggling with an Honors Spanish grade, AND in ways grownups couldn't even have conceived of when we were teens. Peer pressure is more intense, opportunities for bullying are pervasive.

Teenage girls post photos of themselves on Instagram and hundreds of their "friends" weigh in on whether or not they are *on fleek*. A teen's chances of college admission can actually be influenced by what they post on their Facebook page. In fact, what they put on Social Media as young teens can follow them throughout the rest of their life. Teens *follow* a celebrity on Instagram and see hourly images of that celebrity half-dressed, or doing drugs or drinking, or riding in a limousine or on a shopping spree, making that behavior seem normal and aspirational.



As a parent of a teenager, this scares me. A lot. Technology is nearly impossible to keep up with – and where a parent is a "technology immigrant", our teens are "technology natives". There are ways to hide apps on smart phones so parents don't know they are

there. There is a texting app that immediately deletes texts so they disappear. And while the mere mortal parent can't read the disappearing SnapChat – you can be sure an industrious employer, police officer, or court of law can find it if necessary. And school psychologists warn against letting our teens retreat into a "technology cocoon," while at the same time their school work is almost entirely online.

It has always been tough to be a teenager, but I think it's even harder with today's rapidly changing technology landscape.

We have a great group of teens in our church. They are smart, athletic, helpful and funny. They play football, are cheerleaders, are in Student Government, and Boy Scout troops. They like to cook, and play lacrosse and hang out with their friends. They are acolytes and ushers, Sunday School teachers and volunteers. They have jobs, responsibilities and the intense pressures of a competitive school district's rigorous curriculum.

Some are about to leave the safe haven of our little church and our little town for colleges hundreds of miles away. And the rest are right behind them.

How can we help them? It's easy: Talk. Listen. Ask questions about their day. Learn their language [really, it's like a new language]. Be where they are. Be there for them. Help them to feel God's presence in their lives. Help them to feel your presence in their lives.

But mostly pray with them, and pray for them. And stop by the new Youth Group Bulletin board to see how you can let our youth know you're thinking of them.

Kristine DelMonte

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Grace Lutheran

In the last few months, we've made a huge difference at Grace Lutheran Church. Here's what happened recently:

May, 2015- two huge freezers delivered to Grace, donated by Holy Trinity

Sept, 2015- close to 22,000 emergency meals packaged by Holy Trinity/Grace volunteers.

Monday 11/23-29 turkeys purchased and delivered

Tuesday 11/24- all collected cans of cranberries and other canned goods, plus seven bags of winter coats and miscellaneous clothing delivered

Wednesday 11/25- ten complete Thanksgiving meals donated by Narberth Acme Market. In addition, two bags of clothes, plus a plethora of children's book.

Wednesday 12/2- eleven boxes of china and dishware donated by Holy Trinity to Grace.

The holiday project was completed by Don Hall, Susan Snow and Bruce and Dorothy McCluskey.

Donations of money to Grace Lutheran can be made to Holy Trinity, where the money goes into a special account at Philabundance for Grace. Food can then be purchased at 10 cents per pound from the account. Many thanks to all who have taken part all year in our relationship with Grace.

Dickens Festival

On Sunday, November 8th, fourteen volunteers from Holy Trinity and the Narberth Community Food Bank worked together - with much chatter and laughter - to fill 200 jars with the ingredients to make delicious chicken rice soup. The "soup-in-a-jar" was sold at the Dickens Festival in beautiful downtown Narberth on Sunday, December 6th from noon to 4:00. This was our third year participating in the Festival and the second year partnering with the Food Bank.

At this outdoor event, volunteers, again from Holy Trinity and the Food Bank, were costumed for the occasion, handing out soup samples, chatting with friends and neighbors, and sharing information about food insecurity and how to help our community - and selling the lovely gift jars as well! We raised over \$1,000, which will be split between the Giving Garden and the Narberth Community Food Bank.

Narberth Food Bank Donations

In November, Holy Trinity donated 288 rolls of toilet paper and over 300 bars of soap to the Narberth Food Bank. Nice.

Giving Garden

How does our garden grow? Although December weather felt a lot like spring weather, the garden is officially in hibernation mode, waiting for the REAL spring and another season of planting and harvesting and sharing the abundance with our community friends in need. But although the garden is resting, volunteer efforts continued elsewhere on behalf of the Giving Garden.

Sunday, December 6th, was a perfect day for a group of volunteers from Holy Trinity and the Narberth Community Food Bank to sell "soup-in-a-jar" at the Dickens Festival in beautiful downtown Narberth. A thank you to all who helped to set up, sell, and clear up. We couldn't have participated without your support. And a special thanks to Michelle Haslam who continued to share her talents in setting up an attractive display and her soup pot from which soup samples could be shared, both of which certainly helped to make the day successful. All 204 jars made by volunteers in November were sold, raising a little over \$1,000 to benefit the Food Bank directly and indirectly by supporting improvements to the Giving Garden in 2016.

Scholarship Fund

After months of planning and work, we're excited to announce that church council recently approved the founding of the Cedestrom-Sargent Scholarship Fund! This newly-created fund is made possible because of two incredibly generous and faithful families who have blessed Holy Trinity for decades. Thanks to their generosity, Holy Trinity will now be able to award educational scholarships each year to members heading off to college and other higher education. More information and details (including how and when to apply) will be available at the congregational meeting on Sunday, January 31st.

Eating Disorder Support Group

Beginning this month, Holy Trinity will host a weekly Eating Disorder Support Group on Tuesday nights at 7:00pm. The group will be facilitated by Erin Russek, a graduate student at Bryn Mawr. If you are interested or would like more information (or want to pass the information along to someone who may benefit), you can contact Erin by email (erussek@brynmawr.edu). Please note that prior communication and registration with Erin is required before being able to participate.

Thank you

Dear Holy Trinity Family:

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the delicious meals you have provided these last few months. They have nourished our hearts and souls as much as our appetites. We are ever grateful for the community and welcome we have found at Holy Trinity. You have brought light into some of our darkest days.

Love,
Matt and Barb Grimaldi

OPEN TO ALL

Weather and Worship

While it's still 70 degrees as this is being written, we all know the warm weather won't last.

No matter what the weather looks like during the winter, worship will *always* be held at 10:15am on Sunday mornings (the pastor *does* live next door, after all). If the conditions make driving or travel unsafe, please know that it's okay to stay at home - even if you're signed up to help serve in worship! Don't risk your own safety or well-being to come to church. Especially since we'll be gathering to celebrate and worship again the next week! :)

Annual Meeting

Holy Trinity's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 31st after worship. **All adult members of our community are asked to be present**, including those who were confirmed in the past year. As a community we'll review the last year, pass a new budget, hear about our new scholarship fund, and appoint people to serve on church council. Thank you for being there as we take care of this important work together.

Annual Reports Due

Attention ministry leaders! Annual reports for 2015 are due to the church office by Sunday, December 27th. An email was sent early in December as a reminder, and it includes instructions on what to include in your report, and how to write it. This is an important opportunity to share and celebrate all the incredible things that have happened in our church during the last year, and to help our congregation live out our mission statement into the future. If you need any help writing your report, please reach out to Dale for guidance.

Welcome New Pastor at Grace

On Sunday, January 10th, Grace Lutheran will be holding a special worship service to welcome their new pastor, Rev. Dwight Mason. We've been invited to be present to celebrate with them!

If you'd like to join in the fun, please RSVP in the CLC. We'll be leaving Holy Trinity at 3:00 pm and carpooling down together.

Communion Bread

"The body of Christ given for you." These are the words we hear when we come forward during communion. Many of us have heard them again and again in worship as we receive God's grace and love anew. Lutherans have always emphasized that the most important part of this simple statement are the words "for you." Jesus came for you, Jesus died for you, Jesus rose again for you, and Jesus brings forgiveness and grace for you every time we share communion.

We are always in need of people to bake communion bread for worship, and now the opportunity to provide it is offered to you. You can grab a copy of the easy recipe and sign up in the CLC. If you have any questions or need help with the bread, please talk to Pastor Josh or Pat Brubaker!

Financial Snapshot

Member Giving

2015 vs 2014

October 2015	October 2014
\$7,896.00	\$8,152.00
Year to date 2015	Year to date 2014
\$95,190.00	\$86,556.78

Celebrate with us...

January	Name
1	Zachary Traynham
9	Heather Wiley
16	Kathryn Westman
20	Henry Folk
20	Ben Hoffmann
26	Guillermo Salas III



January 2015	1st Sunday of Christmas 1/03/16	Baptism of Our Lord 1/10/16	2nd Sunday after Epiphany 1/17/16	3rd Sunday after Epiphany 1/24/16	4th Sunday after Epiphany 1/31/16
ALTAR CARE	Altar Guild	Altar Guild	Altar Guild	Altar Guild	Altar Guild
COUNTERS	Pat Brubaker and Mary Williamson	Pat Brubaker and Mary Williamson	Pat Brubaker and Mary Williamson	Pat Brubaker and Mary Williamson	Pat Brubaker and Mary Williamson
USHERS	Dave Steiger and Bruce McCluskey	Aaron Simms and Rob Folk	Alan Gebhart, III and Tom DelMonte	Alan Herold and Ayden Herold	Mary Williamson and Eddie Williamson
LECTOR	Don Hall	Dick Hooey	Anne Hoffman	Ayden Herold	Dave Steiger
COMMUNION ASSISTANT	June Duncan	Annie Ferris	Owen DelMonte	Will House	Anne Hoffman
COFFEE HOUR	The Steigers	Aaron Simms	The Burchs	Tina Bale	Carter Williamson
ACOLYTE	Ayden Herold	Henry Folk	Noel House	Royce Engelhard	Owen DelMonte
NURSERY	John Williamson	John Williamson	John Williamson	John Williamson	John Williamson
SUNDAY SCHOOL K-2	No Sunday School	Marianne Folk	No Sunday School	Kim Crews-Engelhard	Congregational Meeting

JANUARY 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 Second Sunday of Christmas 10:15am Worship NO Sunday School	4 Office closed 3:30pm Yoga	5 Pastor Josh back Office closed 2:30pm Finance 7:00pm Eating disorder support group	6 Office closed	7 8:30-1:30 office open	8 8:30-1:30 office open	9
10 Baptism of Our Lord 10:15am Worship with Sunday School 12:00pm Confirmation 3:00pm Leave for Grace	11 8:30-1:30 office open 3:30pm Yoga 6:30pm Policy meeting	12 8:30-1:30 office open 7:00pm Eating disorder support group	13 8:30-1:30 office open 6:30pm Church Council	14 8:30-1:30 office open	15 12:00pm Bible Study	16
17 2 nd Sunday after Epiphany 10:15am Worship NO Sunday School 12:00pm Confirmation 5:00pm Youth Group	18 8:30-1:30 office open 3:30pm Yoga	19 8:30-1:30 office open 7:00pm Eating disorder support group	20 8:30-1:30 office open	21 8:30-1:30 office open	22	23
24 3 rd Sunday after Epiphany 10:15am Worship with Sunday School	25 8:30-1:30 office open 3:30pm Yoga Pastor at First Call retreat	26 8:30-1:30 office open 7:00pm Eating disorder support group Pastor at First Call retreat	27 8:30-1:30 office open Pastor at First Call retreat	28 8:30-1:30 office open Pastor at First Call retreat	29 12:00pm Bible Study	30
31 4 th Sunday after Epiphany 10:15am Worship with Sunday School Annual Congregational Meeting						



Holy Trinity

LUTHERAN CHURCH

N A R B E R T H

Growing in Faith - Making a Difference - Open to All

196 Woodbine Avenue

Narberth, Pa 19072

holytrinitynarberth@gmail.com

610.664.5503

Sunday Worship - 10:15am

Office open Monday - Thursday until 1:30pm



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
196 Woodbine Avenue
Narberth, PA 19072

Holy Trinity Happenings:

Jan 6 – Office reopens

Jan 10 – Welcome New Pastor at Grace Lutheran

Jan 15 – Bible Study

Jan 31 – Annual Congregational Meeting

We are especially Thankful for: