

**Pastors Advent Challenge
to the people of the United Proclamation of the Gospel Parish and
St. John's Windish Lutheran Church!**

December 14- December 20

Share the gift of "Presence"

1. For my facebook friends, or for people who utilize social media. Let's fill social media this week with messages of God's presence within the world in which we live. Point to those people, places, things, you bear witness to which remind you that God is absolutely, positively, present in the world in which we live. Then ask your friends to "Go and Tell" others about the places in which they see God at work in the world.

2. If you don't use social media, have a friend or two over for tea and conversation. Share with them that in the busyness of the season, you simply wanted to slow down and spend time with them. Then; ask them about the places and events in which they see God at work in the world around them. Invite them to "Go and tell" others about what they see.

Some suggested readings on "Presence."

Monday's Reading Exodus 15: 1-18

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD,

for he has triumphed gloriously;

he has hurled both horse and rider

into the sea.

²The LORD is my strength and my song;

he has given me victory.

This is my God, and I will praise him—

my father's God, and I will exalt him!

³The LORD is a warrior;

Yahweh is his name!

⁴Pharaoh's chariots and army

he has hurled into the sea.

The finest of Pharaoh's officers

are drowned in the Red Sea.

⁵The deep waters gushed over them;

they sank to the bottom like a stone.

⁶"Your right hand, O LORD,

is glorious in power.

Your right hand, O LORD,

smashes the enemy.

⁷In the greatness of your majesty,

you overthrow those who rise against you.

You unleash your blazing fury;

it consumes them like straw.

⁸At the blast of your breath,

the waters piled up!
 The surging waters stood straight like a wall;
 in the heart of the sea the deep waters became hard.
⁹“The enemy boasted, ‘I will chase them
 and catch up with them.
 I will plunder them
 and consume them.
 I will flash my sword;
 my powerful hand will destroy them.’
¹⁰But you blew with your breath,
 and the sea covered them.
 They sank like lead
 in the mighty waters.
¹¹“Who is like you among the gods, O LORD—
 glorious in holiness,
 awesome in splendor,
 performing great wonders?
¹²You raised your right hand,
 and the earth swallowed our enemies.
¹³“With your unfailing love you lead
 the people you have redeemed.
 In your might, you guide them
 to your sacred home.
¹⁴The peoples hear and tremble;
 anguish grips those who live in Philistia.
¹⁵The leaders of Edom are terrified;
 the nobles of Moab tremble.
 All who live in Canaan melt away;
¹⁶terror and dread fall upon them.
 The power of your arm
 makes them lifeless as stone
 until your people pass by, O LORD,
 until the people you purchased pass by.
¹⁷You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain—
 the place, O LORD, reserved for your own dwelling,
 the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established.
¹⁸The LORD will reign forever and ever!”

Prayer: Almighty God, Your power and majesty are on display for the world to see! Open the eyes of our mind Lord, to give honor and glory to Your holy name. That in the daily forces of nature which sustain our lives, the world would give praise and glory to You forever and ever. Amen.

Tuesday’s Reading Psalm 121

¹ I look up to the mountains—
 does my help come from there?
² My help comes from the LORD,
 who made heaven and earth!

- ³ He will not let you stumble;
the one who watches over you will not slumber.
- ⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel
never slumbers or sleeps.
- ⁵ The LORD himself watches over you!
The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade.
- ⁶ The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon at night.
- ⁷ The LORD keeps you from all harm
and watches over your life.
- ⁸ The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go,
both now and forever.

Prayer: Comforting God, in our moments of weakness, in our moments of struggle, in our moments of want, You come to us as a comforting parent. Surround the world in Your loving arms Lord, that all might know the pure unconditional love and concern that You possess for the whole of this world. In Jesus' name we pray these things, Amen.

Wednesday's Reading Acts 4:23-31

²³ As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. ²⁴ When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— ²⁵ you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

'Why were the nations so angry?
Why did they waste their time with futile plans?
²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared for battle;
the rulers gathered together
against the LORD
and against his Messiah.'^[a]

²⁷ "In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. ²⁸ But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. ²⁹ And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹ After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, even as we come through the wilderness in seasons of darkness, it is You and You alone who provide a light for us to follow. As we emerge into the glorious light of the birth of Your Child, allow our hearts and minds to yearn for a greater presence of Your shalom in the lives of all humankind. We ask these things in the name of the One born in a manger, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Thursday's Reading

Mark 7:24-30

²⁴ Then Jesus left Galilee and went north to the region of Tyre. ^[1] He didn't want anyone to know which house he was staying in, but he couldn't keep it a secret. ²⁵ Right away a woman who had heard about him came and fell at his feet. Her little girl was possessed by an evil ^[1] spirit, ²⁶ and she begged him to cast out the demon from her daughter.

Since she was a Gentile, born in Syrian Phoenicia, ²⁷ Jesus told her, "First I should feed the children—my own family, the Jews. ^[k] It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

²⁸ She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are allowed to eat the scraps from the children's plates."

²⁹ "Good answer!" he said. "Now go home, for the demon has left your daughter." ³⁰ And when she arrived home, she found her little girl lying quietly in bed, and the demon was gone.

Prayer: Healing Lord, Your healing hand touches us in ways that we often don't notice or see. On this day Lord, open our eyes to the many people in places in which Your healing presence is known and felt. Guide the hands and the minds of all health care workers that through the hands that You have so graciously gifted that the world would feel renewed and restored to health. In Jesus' name we pray these things, Amen.

Friday's Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, ^[b] baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Prayer: Glorious Lord, You have acted in ways which leave those who witness Your glory in Awe and in splendor! Allow all those who feel Your presence to feel the glory of Your presence in the world in which we live and love, laugh and mourn. Mystify our minds Lord with Your ability to be present in every moment of our day! In Jesus' name we pray these things, Amen.

Saturday's Reading

Luke 1:26-38

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you

will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Prayer: Loving God, as You have come to many in the past, come to us now. Amen.

Sunday’s Reading Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ Mary responded,

“Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵² He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵ For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”

Prayer: Almighty Lord, be with us during this time of Advent that we may be renewed in the retelling of the story of Christ’s birth. Amen.