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Holy Night, Refracted Light...

by Pastor Gina

In 1672, Isaac Newton wrote a paper detailing his experiment of shining light through a prism. He noted that when white light is shown through a prism, light bends and reveals seven different colors – the colors of the rainbow. This ground-breaking discovery of bending light is what we call “refraction.” It is because of refraction that we see color (including rainbows!), can comprehend distance, and have lenses and magnifying glasses to help us see more clearly. In addition to light, sound, water, and air all can be refracted, all of which help to create our understanding and perception of the world in which we live.

In John 1:1-5 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that

life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

This passage is one that is often read during Advent and the Christmas season. We read it at this time of the church year because it reminds us that out of God’s great love for us, God, who is the creator of the universe, chose to come to earth in the form of a tiny baby, born in humble means, to a low income family. And according to the author of the gospel of John, this baby, Jesus, is the light of the world, the light that shines in the darkness. Amidst the fears, hatred, and horrors that afflict this world, Jesus is still here among us, shining that light.

However, that’s not always easy to see. It’s difficult to see and grasp Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, in a broken world. What does God’s presence even look like today? Where do we even start looking?

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At Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

We believe we are called by the Holy Spirit to proclaim and embody the compassionate, challenging, and inclusive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Advent and Christmas Happenings!

Sunday, December 17th - Children's Christmas Program at 11:00 am

Sunday, December 17th - Christmas Concert at 4:00 pm

Thursday, December 21st - Longest Night Service at 7:00 pm

Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve Services at 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm, and 8:00 pm

Sunday, December 31st - Sunday Service of Lessons and Carols - 10:00 am

For more detailed information, see the back page.

Pastor's Letter (continued)

Christians often talk about how we are called to reflect Jesus' light, as though Jesus' light comes from somewhere else far away, and bounces off of us somehow in random directions. This gives the image that we are simply called to quote scripture, publicly do good works to show God is working through us, and publicly pray for people's salvation in order to reflect the light of Christ.

However, I wonder if it would be more accurate to give the image of refracting God's light to the world, to allow God's story and the light and understanding of Jesus to bend in different ways, allowing different views of God, different experiences, different cultures – the many colors of the world that we so often ignore or don't see – to influence our faith and life, and help us grow in new ways that allow God's light to not only shine in the world but bend to help us view the world differently. After all, wasn't that part of what that "holy night" in Bethlehem, as well as Jesus entire ministry and life, was all about? Changing the way we understood and perceived how God worked (and still works) in the world today? I pray that throughout this season of Advent and Christmas, you are able to not only find God and feel God's presence, but also be surprised by the refracted light shone through you and many others in the world today.

Peace,
Pastor Gina



Giving Trees

This year our Giving Trees are doing a new thing! Our Trees will offer you opportunities for alternative giving: supporting great work in honor of someone you love. Watch for the trees to arrive on Sunday, December 3rd, with opportunities to support local and national needs.

One of the Trees is sponsored by the Refugee Resettlement Committee for a project called *Fresh Change*, where clothing basics are given to refugees and asylum-seekers who enter the country with only the clothes on their backs. Stay tuned for more details on other Giving Trees.

Thank you so much for your support of charitable organizations during this Advent and Christmas season.



Sign up for Flowers!

The 2024 Flower Signup Chart is now available on the kiosk in the narthex. You are invited to sign up (in person or by calling the church office) to provide flowers for our Sunday worship services between now and the end of 2024. If there is a special designation (such as an anniversary), please note that as well. You may bring flowers from your garden in a vase from home, or order a bouquet from a local florist or grocery store. Please take them home after worship on that Sunday.

End-of-Year Giving

Making an end-of-year gift is a wonderful act of generosity. Tax-deductible donations postmarked or received by December 31, 2023 qualify for the 2023 tax year. We give thanks for the generosity of this congregation and look forward to 2024! Watch for your 2023 giving statement by the end of January.

K-3 K'Motion Kids Gift Workshop

Saturday, December 2nd | 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Ho..Ho..Ho!! Join us for the Gift Workshop! All kindergarten through 3rd grade students are invited to a fun afternoon of surprise-gift making activities for your loved ones (no adults allowed)! This event encourages children to make gifts for their loved ones. We provide the holiday music and helpers to ensure we have enough extra hands. There will be a hot chocolate bar where kids can make a cup of hot chocolate to enjoy with a few cookies. Please wear clothes that can get messy. Please RSVP by signing up on the website so we have enough supplies for everyone! If you have any questions, please contact Becky Cole at children@hslckirkland.org.



Route 456 Candy Houses

Sunday, December 3rd | 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm

4th, 5th, and 6th graders - join us in the Fellowship Hall for a time of making some crazy candy houses, playing games, and enjoying time with friends. Bring a bag of candy, friends, and \$5. We'll have a Hot Chocolate bar to make the best hot chocolate you can! We look forward to seeing the creations your child makes! There are prizes for the top 3 peer voted winners. Friends are welcome! Please RSVP online so we have enough supplies. If you have any questions, please contact Becky Cole at children@hslckirkland.org.



Church on the Go! for Grades 7/8

Sunday, December 10th | 9:15 am

We will meet at Holy Spirit at 9:15 am and travel to another church in the area in a quest to discover how other people worship God. We will also grab something to eat along the way (bring \$20 for food). This month we will head to Lake Washington United Methodist Church in Kirkland! Sign up on the church website if you want to go! Questions? Contact Tammie Zarfos at confirmation@hslckirkland.org.

Little Spirits Happy Birthday Jesus Party

Sunday, December 10th | 11:00 am to noon

Families with children Pre-K and younger are invited to join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Activities include crafts, a Christmas story, and singing. Before we leave, everyone will receive a sweet treat to take home! We look forward to seeing everyone to kick-off the Christmas season with fun and fellowship! If you have any questions, please contact Becky Cole at children@hslckirkland.org.





Youth Leadership Summit Reflection

The ELCA Youth Leadership Summit empowers and inspires young people within their congregations, communities, and synods to embrace their calling and become influential leaders beyond their current context. This year's theme, "Called on The Way" focuses on exploring the unique journeys that individuals take in response to their calling and how these journeys shape their leadership abilities through Biblical narratives and alongside our many ELCA advocacy partners. Each synod is invited to send two youth leaders (in grades 9-12) and one adult to the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit. This year Zander Cole, Benny Williams, and Becky Cole attended the Youth Leadership Summit, which was held in Chicago. While only there Thursday through Sunday, there was much learning, laughter, and growing from the youth and the adults. Here are their reflections:

I'm a person who loves going to youth group and loves the community around it. When I was asked to co-represent my youth group at this Summit, I was very excited at the opportunity. While there, not only did I get to experience it with my friend Zander, I got to meet some great new people. They assigned us into "family groups," and our group developed a special bond, and we continue to be in touch. We compared notes about youth involvement at our churches and given our great youth program at our church, I was surprised to learn that many of the other kids' churches did not have very active youth programs. Given this common issue, I think it was a goal of the Summit to inspire youth to be active leaders in their communities. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn some new leadership skills and would highly recommend this Summit to any youth who is offered the opportunity to go in the future. – Benny

I would like to thank Becky Cole and Benny Williams for going to the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit with me. Over a few days, I learned about other churches experience inside the ELCA, especially with our youth. The people that help organized and the people that went, I believe, have the same goal for our future in our churches, though I slightly disagree with the message. I continue to do the work of God and would like to work with ELCA in the future. We talked about how we can help people stay and feel welcome to join our church. Inside that discussion, we also talked about more acceptance for our youth, this includes the guidance of a personal connection with God and where youth can at least meet once. The Summit is a place where youth feel like they are represented and learned how to build community through all ages. Thank you. – Zander

The Youth Leadership Summit was a great gathering of youth from across the country, along with a leader from each synod. The Youth Core Leadership Team did a great job of planning this event and it included speakers from lots of different perspectives, along with time to get to know others, and then reflect on where we are in the world today with a Candlelight time. Bishop Curry welcomed us in our opening worship and had a wonderful message of inclusivity. The youth attended 3 workshops throughout the weekend related to Advocacy, Transitioning from Youth to Young Adult, Listening to Others and Ourselves, and more. While the youth were in workshops, the adults had their own track where they learned more about the ELCA Youth Gathering (Listening to our Youth), and sharing our experiences with each other. We also met in our region for part of our adult track and it was great to meet others from our region. The youth played "Glow in the Dark Hide and Seek" one evening in the Lutheran Center and even got to hide in Bishop Eaton's office – not many youth can say that! Our closing worship was uplifting and sent all of us out to share the inclusive love of Christ. It was a blessing to represent the synod and HSLC at this event. – Becky

Morning Meditation

Saturday, December 2nd | 10:00 am

The members of the Contemplative Prayer group invites you to join them for Morning Meditation on Saturday, December 9th at 10:00 am. The service will include prayer, simple music, 20 minutes of silent meditation, and encounter of the Scripture through Lectio Divina. No previous experience is needed. All are welcome. If you plan to attend, please contact Christina at cebrug@gmail.com so we can set up enough chairs.

Library News: Reading and Reflecting

At our last meeting, the library committee was discussing criteria for new books for the library. One suggestion we all liked was that the book should draw the reader to reflect. What kind of books meet this requirement? It isn't as simple as just picking certain genres and avoiding others.

For example, a good novel can elicit new thoughts and feelings about oneself, the world, human nature, God, etc. It can introduce you to cultures and situations that you have never faced in your own life, and in the process teach you something new. Or it can just be written so well that you see a familiar situation in a new way.

On the other hand, a novel can be just a lot of fun – pure entertainment; not a lot of reflection involved. And that is OK, too! Many of us love to read just for fun. However, as best we can, we would like to make choices for the Holy Spirit library which go beyond entertainment alone. Something similar can be said of non-fiction genres.

Can you think of examples of books that have made you reflect? Would you be willing to share your thoughts about them to help us explore this? I'd love to write another article later in the year sharing our combined wisdom. Please email me at ruthmunger@comcast.net. If you are not an emailing person, feel free to write your thoughts on paper and put them in one of the library book return boxes. Thanks!

Ruth Munger



Mission:
To expand the intersection of intellect and spirituality while holding physical space in our busy world for prayer, introspection and study.

Parents of Adults with Disabilities - Support Group

every third Saturday from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, starting January 20, 2024

What is it? This group will provide connection and mutual help for those whose parenting includes significant, lifelong care and care plans for their adult offspring.

Why come? It is easy to drift into isolation with the combination of extra tasks and cumulative losses. The group encourages friendly support through our shared perspectives. We will exchange resources, as appropriate.

Group Format: This will be a facilitated group, led by a social worker, who is also parenting an adult with painful and disabling medical conditions. We will together decide on what will be meaningful to us as topics.

What it is not: This is not a forum for alternative remedies, cures, or formulae for "faith healing." Email lists may not be shared for marketing purposes.

Where and When: Meetings will be every third Saturday from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, starting January 20, 2024

Register: hslckirkland.org/pad-support-group-signup

Questions? Contact Deb MacKenzie at nurturingattachments@gmail.com.

Social Justice: Refugee Resettlement Committee Prayers for Those Seeking a Safe Harbor

December is a miraculous month, one of celebrating the ultimate gift in our lives - that of Jesus Christ. It is also a month to reflect on the abundance of blessings we have in our lives. We have so much to be thankful for with safe shelter, ready nourishment, dear family and friends, and security.

Now imagine a life where your roots are completely torn from beneath you. One where your future becomes shrouded in fear due to world turmoil, one of large-scale insecurity. This is the soul of refugees seeking a safe harbor upon forcibly having to leave all behind. These are people seeking guidance, basic material needs, and a secure place to call home for their families.

Our church is a gift in many ways. We have a Refugee Resettlement Committee within our walls working with these souls to find their needed stability within our community. Our wish for you this holiday season is to ask for your gift of prayers. As we continue to move forth on this mission of resettlement, your prayers are our taproot. They are our nourishment to help keep families safe and secure. We thank you for your never-ending gift.

Holiday Blessings from the Refugee Resettlement Committee!



Social Justice: Housing & Homelessness from Jack Staudt

I often share news and the great works on our local Kirkland homelessness charities, supported by your generous financial support to the HSLC budget and the Social Justice fund. This month, I will share a new name and partner in the continuum of homeless care on the Eastside - *PorchLight*.

Congregations for the Homeless (CFH) is pleased to announce they are transitioning to a new name: *PorchLight*.

Since October 1993, when CFH welcomed its first guest, the name "Congregations for the Homeless" has served them well. But perceptions and attitudes about homelessness and social services have evolved in the past three decades, and so has CFH. With the opening of their new shelter in its permanent location, they feel that the timing is right to refresh their brand and showcase their evolved continuum of care.

The name *PorchLight* embodies the guiding principles and values underpinning their work from the beginning: Relationships, Dignity and Respect, Community, and Empowerment. Just as a porch light provides a beacon of hope and warmth, this organization provides a guiding light for those in need, offering a safe space, support, and a sense of belonging to individuals experiencing homelessness.

This is the first permanent home facility dedicated to homeless men on the Eastside. And as with many other shelter organizations, started by faith-based congregations seeing the need and advocating over many years to make this happen. They overcame the "not-in-my-backyard" culture in suburban neighborhoods, the bureaucracy of building codes, and the challenging Covid barriers to raise millions from churches and corporate supporters.

Now it is our turn to help sustain this work. *PorchLight* has been added to our Social Justice giving list, and you can help. Send a donation to HSLC and just note it is for "homelessness", or *PorchLight* specifically.

Visit their website to learn more: porchlightcares.org.

Blessings to you in this season of Thanks and Giving!

SJV Christmas Trees—St. John Vianney Church (12600 84th Avenue NE, Kirkland)

St. John Vianney Catholic Church is hosting a Christmas tree and wreath sale. All proceeds go to support their youth who will be building houses in Mexico. Hours are: Mon & Tues: 4-8 pm, Wed: 3-8pm, Thurs: 4-8pm, Fri: 3-8 pm, Sat: 9am-7pm, Sun: 9am-5pm. For more information, contact Susan Weaver at 425-823-0787 or sweaver@sjvkirkland.org.



Children's Christmas Program - *Las Posadas* Sunday, December 17th | 11:00 am

Plan to attend worship at 11:00 am on Sunday, December 17th so you can enjoy our annual Children's Christmas Program! This year, the students of our Sunday School class will be sharing the tradition of *Las Posadas*. *Las Posadas* is focused on the journey of Mary and Joseph into Bethlehem, especially their struggle to find a place for Mary to give birth to Jesus. *Posadas* means *Inns* in Spanish - Mary and Joseph go from inn to inn in search of a place to stay. This program promises to be a lot of fun and will help get you in the mood for Christmas and celebrating Jesus' birth.

Rehearsals will start Sunday, December 3rd during the 9:30am Sunday School time. Questions? Contact Becky Cole at children@hslckirkland.org.

Christmas Concert Sunday, December 17th | 4:00 pm

Please join us for a musical celebration of Advent and Christmas the afternoon of Sunday, December 17th at 4:00 pm (note the new time). This year's theme is "Joy in a Weary World", featuring the Chancel Choir, Spirit Ringers, Lorica, and other special musicians. Come to listen and to sing together!





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Worship Services in December

Sundays at 8:00 am, 9:30 am, and 11:00 am (except Christmas Eve/New Year's Eve)

Sunday, December 17th at 11:00 am - Children's Christmas Program

Thursday, December 21st at 7:00 pm - Longest Night

Each year we honor the longest night of the year and the reality of grief and loss which accompanies the Advent and Christmas seasons. The Longest Night refers to the "dark night of the soul" that many people experience this time of year. Share a quiet moment of hope and inspiration during this bright busy season.

It will not be Livestreamed. Childcare will be available.

Sunday, December 24th - Christmas Eve
at 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, 4:00 pm, , and 8:00 pm

Services include communion and candlelight.

Childcare and non-burning luminaries provided at 10:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 4:00 pm.

Livestreamed at 10:00 am and 8:00 pm.

Sunday, December 31st - New Year's Eve at 10:00 am (one service only)

Festival of Lessons and Carols - join us for Christmas carol singing! No Livestreaming or childcare.