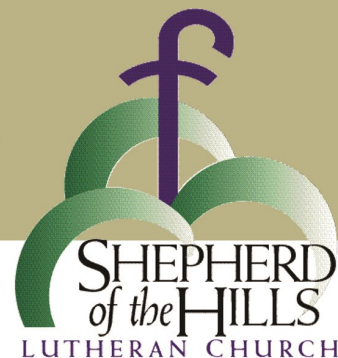


# Shepherd's Voice



December 2021

## **“All is Calm, All is Bright”**

By Pastor Scott Searl

*“While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” Luke 2:6-7*

Maybe it's just me. I was hoping that by now we would be looking forward to a sanctuary filled with the warmth of families this Christmas. I had visions of sugar plums dancing through the aisles as our kids piled into the front of the church for the kids' message. Every year the poetry of kids gathered around a manger in the dim light of Christmas Eve reminds me that faith is childlike, vulnerable, hopeful and full of abounding energy. That childlike kid enthusiasm that sometimes gets too close to the candles and nearly tips them over into the waiting dry branches of Christmas trees! All is not calm, and all is almost REALLY bright!

Yet, as I make plans once again to meet with the Return Team, the covid cases continue to rise and the map of Minnesota continues to glow red with the heat of transmission. The chaos of covid continues to swirl even as our kids get vaccinated, and our adults get boosters. I imagine that Thanksgiving will yield another cycle of increased cases, and this will heighten my own sense of caution. I'm afraid that Christmas Eve won't be quite back to normal, and I was so hoping that it would be.

So, maybe it's just me, but my soul is a bit raw again this year. The journey to Bethlehem has been rough. The governors like Quirinius are fighting with one another, decrees go out, legislation gets passed, people travel to their hometowns to argue with distant relatives over why there are so many help-wanted signs. There are delays in deliveries and restaurants display limited hours on their doors for lack of workers. There is no room in the inn because the housekeeping staff is shorthanded. Shepherds can't get their sheep to market and when they get there everyone is angry at the rising price of meat. There is an unvaccinated uncle sleeping on your couch, and you're worried about grandma.

Into my weary soul, almost without notice, somewhere that is really nowhere, or maybe more fully, everywhere ... a child is born. There's no parade, no trumpets, no angels singing. At least not yet. Silently God sneaks into the world through the amazing bravery of a young woman filled with holy tenderness. This mom is young, strong and full of will. It's her vulnerability that makes her strong. Mary gives birth and like Mary, God is as vulnerable a child laid in manger.

**Continued on page 2**

**Shepherd of the Hills  
Lutheran Church  
500 Blake Road South  
Edina, MN 55343  
(952) 935-3457**

**Staff:**

Pastors	Scott Searl, Sherri Otto
Assistant/Visitation Pastor	Fred Jensen
Music Director	Emily Koski
Intern Pastor	Anne Schaefer
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

**Church Council Members / Officers:**

President	Adam Driscoll
Vice President	Don Wothe
Treasurer	Steve Hanneman
Financial Secretary	Ryan Erickson
Secretary	Christa Meland
Serve	Nate Lichy
Worship & Music	Julia Buteyn
Building & Facilities	Peter Barott
Learn	Stephanie Nordin
Communications	Jill Miller
Care	Dave Cousins
LMCC	Open
Evaluation	Chris Polston

**Telephone & Voice Mail Extensions:**

Worship Times	1
Directions	2
Shawn Wacholz	11
Pastor Scott Searl	12
Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer	14
Blair Prax	15
Emergency Message Mailbox	24
Kaye Wothe	25

**Shepherd Online!**

Pr. Scott Searl	scott@sothchurch.com
Pr. Sherri Otto	sherri.otto@sothchurch.com
Intern Pr. Anne Schaefer	anne.schaefer@sothchurch.com
Shawn Wacholz	office@sothchurch.com
Kaye Wothe	kaye.wothe@sothchurch.com
Blair Prax	blair.prax@sothchurch.com
Church web site	www.sothchurch.com

**Pastor's Message continued from page 1**

There is light in the darkness. There is new life in the world. Hope has been born, if we have eyes to see. There is the chance that while gently noticing the vulnerability of the Christ child, we might see that all our fighting, all our arguments, all our disagreements melt away into the truth that we are all fragile human beings. Somehow our human fragility is given a holy blessing in this child. It's not that we are right that makes us strong, it's when we are most at risk, teetering on the edge that God has found human life most accommodating to discovering the truth.

So... even if the sanctuary is a little more subdued, even if the chaos of our daily din is loud, there will still be the warmth of God's presence. There will be the invitation to come once again to the manger and let our fragility show. There will be the chance to see that God's love doesn't wipe out the winds that whip around our lives, but that God's love does come in the eye of the storm, where for a just a moment all is calm, and all is bright. "And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." Maybe it's just me, but that's what I'm hoping for Christmas this year.



## **PRESIDENT'S POST:**

### **Looking Ahead, Seeking Input**

*By Adam Driscoll, Council President*

As we approach the end of the year, your church council is working on planning and budgeting for 2022, and in doing so we naturally find ourselves reflecting on the year that's gone past. It's been about a half a year now since myself

and others have started our current terms, and admittedly, one piece that's still taking some getting used to is becoming a newsletter columnist! It has been strange to send columns out into the universe with little in the way of feedback, as I'm more of a conversationalist than one for written correspondence.

To that end, and to best help our council with 2022 planning, I want to hear from you. Over a year and a half into the pandemic, we've learned to live with some aspects of the ways the world has changed, and in others, we still wonder what our world will look like in the years to come. So I'd like to know any feedback you'd like to share about Shepherd, about things that you currently appreciate, or things that need improvement. Especially, I'd like to hear your aspirations of where you think we're called to go, the ways you want Shepherd to be a part of your lives, and how we best accommodate those aspirations. I look forward to hearing from you, either after worship, or by email at [driscolla@gmail.com](mailto:driscolla@gmail.com)

## **CONSECRATION NOTE**

Thank you to all who completed their promise card for our annual stewardship appeal. Thank you! If you haven't yet completed your card, please do so today. If you need a new card, they are available at the back of the sanctuary or contact the church office. Thank you for your gifts that support our mission, ministry and life together!

## **2021 CONTRIBUTIONS**

All contributions for the year 2021 need to be received in the church office by noon on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021 in order to be entered on 2021 giving statements. Any contributions received after this time will be posted on 2022 statements.



## HOPE IN THE DARKNESS December 19th, 2021 at 5:00pm

Christmas may not always be a “merry” time for people, especially when there has been a loss in your life. Loss of a job, loss of community or loss of a loved one can all become too heavy of a burden to carry alone, especially when everyone around you appears to be filled with holiday cheer. Many of us have faced such losses and our fear, anxiety and loneliness maybe hard to manage.

Please join us on Sunday, December 19th at 5:00 pm for a special service, both at SOTH and on Zoom. This service is filled with music, prayer and a time for silent reflection, to allow you to grieve and to hope as we await the birth of Jesus. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Sherri at [sherri.otto@sothchurch.com](mailto:sherri.otto@sothchurch.com) or 612-251-1342.



## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

During these days of Advent and Christmas, may the good news of Jesus’ birth fill our lives and our world with joy and peace. Let heaven and nature sing!

Join us for worship in person and on zoom.

- November 28** **“We Wait in Hope” 9:30 am**  
1st Sunday in Advent—“I know the plans I have for you.”
- December 5** **“We Watch with Expectation” 9:30 am**  
2nd Sunday in Advent– “God’s promise of new life”
- December 12** **Youth-Led Worship 9:30 am**  
SOTH presents the LIVING WORD Christmas program, written by Joe Davis. SOTH youth will lead worship and narrate the Nativity story from a unique and interactive approach through poetry, music, dance and art.
- December 19** **“Mary and Elizabeth” 9:30 am**  
The mother of Jesus, Mary, and the mother of John the Baptist, Elizabeth, were cousins. Come listen to their conversation as they both endured their pregnancies and prepared for the coming of their sons together.
- December 19** **“Hope in the Darkness” worship—5:00 pm**  
Hope in the Darkness is a time where people who have or are experiencing loss, isolation or emptiness, come together to listen to readings, song and silence as we look with hope in the dark places, to the light and birth of Jesus.
- December 24** **Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship — 3:00 & 5:00 pm**



## ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE . . .

### IMMIGRANT MINISTRY

Artur, Naida, Akhmed, and Murad, the family whom we will accompany on their asylum journey in America. This family of four arrived in the United States from Russia in April. They lived in St. Paul until their move into the parsonage on October 26. Since the move, the family has been busy meeting with ACT-TC, receiving medical evaluations, meeting with their immigration attorney, and just getting settled into their new home. Artur and Naida have expressed their appreciation for all that they have already received. When asked if the family needed anything, Artur replied, “We have so much.”

The family came to the attention of ACT-TC by way of the St. Paul Public School District, where the two preschool-aged boys, Akhmed who is 4 and Murad who is 18 months, were enrolled in special programs. Efforts are currently underway to get the boys into programs in the Hopkins School District. Artur has also expressed a desire for both himself and Akhmed to play hockey and soccer.

ACT-TC’s commitment to this family will require a tremendous amount of support from donors and volunteers. Under asylum rules, Artur cannot apply for a work permit until April of 2022. Once he has that, he can then apply for a driver’s license. However, because of the backlog of asylum cases, it may be two years before the family’s asylum case is heard. Financial donations are needed for legal fees, medical expenses, food, clothing, and incidentals. Volunteers are also needed to provide rides to medical and legal appointments, and basically anywhere that the family needs to go. Additionally, Artur and Naida will need help in getting set up to receive ESL instruction (English as a second language). While Artur and Naida are not proficient in English, they appear to be eager learners. They translate texts and emails with the help of apps like Google Translate. Charades or drawings might also be a fun way to communicate with them!

We would like to build relationships with our new friends, help them become connected to their new community, and offer opportunities for fun for the boys! It is our hope that two SOTH families, who also have preschool-aged children, will step forward to be in regular contact with the family. This would mean planning get-togethers perhaps 1-2 times a month for a year, such as scheduling play dates, meeting at a playground once a month, introducing the boys to story time at the library, taking them to the local rec center, or planning a fun outing using your imagination!

If you and your family are open to developing a longer-term relationship with our asylum family or are interested in learning more about how you can volunteer or help financially, please contact Pastor Sherri or me.

Paul Bohnsack  
952-891-5677  
bohnsackps@frontiernet.net



## ResourceWest Toy Chest Drive

### Donations accepted up to Dec. 10

Help a child celebrate the Holidays. Donations of gift items for ages 0-12 and 13-18 are being collect at ResourceWest (1011 1st Street S., Suite 109, Hopkins). Visit their website <https://www.resourcewest.org/toy-chest-program/> for more details.

## SOTH BOOK CLUB

Book club at SOTH is open to all, male and female. Please feel free to join us. We have 2-3 copies of each book. All books will be available all year if you want to read ahead.

Please read the book and return ASAP so another person can borrow the book for reading also. We try to get 2-3 readers to be able to read one copy.

Meetings will be held in person and on Zoom. For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at [kwothe@comcast.net](mailto:kwothe@comcast.net)

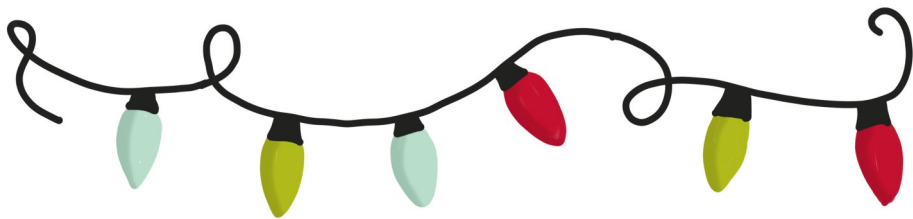
## Book Club Schedule

Thurs., January 6 at 7:00 pm

“The Girl with the Louding Voice”  
by Abi Dare

## WEDNESDAY AM BIBLE STUDY

Come for Bible study, coffee, and fellowship! The Wednesday morning group meets at 9:30 am for coffee, treats and fellowship before they begin a Bible study. The Bible study begins at 10:00 am and is based on the following Sunday’s sermon text. All are welcome.



## WEDNESDAY SPEAKER SERIES

Our Wednesday Night Adult Education Speaker Series continues. We plan to meet in person but for those who prefer, a Zoom connection will also be available. All are welcome, kids and adults. Speakers start at 6:30 pm. We hope you will join us!

**Date:** Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 6:30 pm

**Topic:** Emotional Intelligence

**Speaker:** Danny Elenz, Leaderwise

Description: Perhaps attending to our emotional intelligence is more important than ever during this period of adaptive challenge and change. It seems as though crises/challenges (e.g. Covid-19, ongoing conflicts, the murder of George Floyd, climate change, political strife) shine a spotlight on our interpersonal skills, stress tolerance, conflict management, and decision making skills. In this workshop, we will discuss the particular relevance of this vital skill during this time. You will have the opportunity to complete the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), a psychological inventory assessing emotional intelligence, providing the opportunity to gain individual feedback on your strengths/gifts and growth areas around emotional intelligence.

Danny Elenz is a psychologist at LeaderWise, a non-profit in the Twin Cities whose mission is to serve people in ministry. Danny is passionate about connecting with people in ministry through therapy, consultation, and assessment to assist them in their development.

## RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION SERIES

Our education series on Racial Justice continues. Our speakers (David Scherer, Joe Davis and Justice Feldman) will help facilitate some strategic thinking and planning with our church council and staff. And they will be helping to lead us to new ways of thinking and being in the world both as individuals and as a family of faith. **We hope you will make every effort to participate in this unique opportunity.** We have much to learn about our history and ourselves.

**Date:** Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at 6:30 pm

**Topic:** “From Fragility to Resilience”

**Speaker:** Joe Davis and Dave Scherer, JUSTMove

**Description:** How can we move beyond our own biases and instincts to become instruments of God's liberation? In this session we develop practices that help us move beyond just our brains and get us into our bodies where real transformation lies.



## CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

### LIVING WORD

**Youth Christmas Program 2021  
Sunday, December 12 at 9:30am**

We are super excited for our Confirmations students to present to you this year's Christmas program, *Living Word*, created by spoken word artist, Joe Davis. The students will bring the Nativity story to life through word, poetry, music, dance and congregational participation.

Joe writes, "Living Word means that God's word is alive in Scripture, in Christ, and in us. The Nativity reveals to us the incarnate, enfleshed, embodied truth of new life and new birth... When we're struggling with fear and despair, the presence of Emmanuel, God With Us, is an empowering reminder that we are given courage and hope."

Please join us as we journey from Mary's home to the Inn at Bethlehem, from the Shepherd's Field to the Stable where Jesus is born. Bring your family and friends to Living Word, Youth Christmas program! This is something you will not want to miss!!



### OUTDOOR CHRISTMAS FUN AND GAMES!

**Sunday, December 12, 10:30 to  
11:30**

Following the Youth Christmas Program, we will have fun, outdoor games for the younger students, Pre-K to 5th grade from 10:30 to 11:30 am. Please dress accordingly to weather conditions.



### CONFIRMATION Christmas Caroling & Party December 22

Wednesday, December 22nd, 6-7:30 is a Caroling Food Drive AND Christmas Party for our 6-8th grade students! Bring food or personal items from home, and then

we'll walk the neighborhoods together collecting even more items to donate to . We'll wrap up our night with Christmas themed shenanigans! Dress warmly and let's celebrate the birth of our Savior together!!



### CONFIRMATION FALL RETREAT RECAP

The Middle School Fall Event was a great success! Nine 6-8th graders had fun competing in pumpkin bowling, a pumpkin hunt, pumpkin redecorating, scarecrow creation AND an escape room! We laughed a lot and ate yummy snacks! Students were already asking to "do this again" before they even left! Looking forward to many more events like this to build community together!

# Staff Reflection

## At Every Turn continued

A few people have asked me “what’s next” after internship. I never really know what to talk about... thanks to the great community at SOTH I know that I would love working in a congregation similar to this one. But the reality is that I don’t have a lot of control over where I end up. The synod helps to place pastors in congregations, and there is no guarantee if or where I will be matched with a congregation. It could be a long wait, but I know that I’ll at least enjoy the unemployment for a little while. Learning to be a pastor also means that I have to learn how to trust the system and have patience. Ummm... this is difficult.

Grace and peace!  
Pastor Anne

## Pt. 3 God is at the heart continued

If you need assistance with your heating bills, a break from caring for your elderly parents, or even an ear to listen to your fears, ask for help and referrals at church or a community agency. It is not a weakness to ask for help, and, trust me, you will have many opportunities in your life to “pay it forward”.

Remember too, that it often hurts people when their offers of help are refused. If you don’t believe me, think of the last time you wanted to help a friend or family member in need, and they insisted that they could handle the problem on their own.

God gives us all burdens and challenges, but God also gives us the gift of people in our families, our communities, and our churches to support us. Take advantage of this help, and remember that God is in these people and is at the heart of the gift.



## AT EVERY TURN: Insights from the Intern

By Intern Pastor Anne Schaefer

*Welcome to my little corner of the world. As an intern pastor, I am learning a great deal about what it means to be called to ministry. Each month, I will use this newsletter space to reflect on the wisdom that has come my way. I will likely learn a great deal about God, the Church, this congregation, faith, myself and grace. Thanks for being part of my journey!*

Lesson #1 this month: I am learning the importance of self-care. As a pastor, this seems counterintuitive. This job is to be there for people; to walk along side people; and to be available to people when they need me. While it can seem like I have a million things to do, I have learned the incredible value of taking the time to do something fun, healthy or relaxing every single day. It is not always convenient, but my relationships are better, and I feel like a whole person. One of the ways I learned to do this is to create “personal policies” as opposed to “boundaries.” This feels like a positive way to articulate my priorities and needs. The people that call me their pastor are getting a better version of me, and that is certainly worth the extra care!

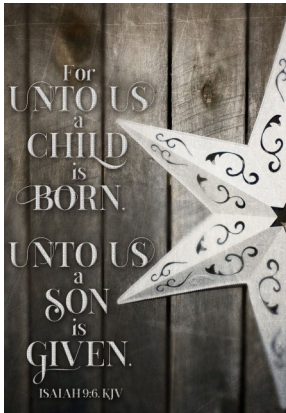
#2: For the last decade, racial justice conversations have been quite common for me. While wanting to do my part by learning more and doing more, I often have felt a little frozen, unsure how to go about it. I heard two different presentations this month that helped address that feeling. The first response was about prayer and meditation. The presenter offered that I should not feel like I’m frozen FROM something, but rather that I’m stationary FOR something – the Holy Spirit. This presenter upheld that spending time talking to God is a good way to process my learning and my thoughts, but I also need to sit in meditative spaces so I can hear the Spirit’s directives.

The second presentation that I heard was super helpful by saying that we all can’t do the same thing. We all have different talents and resources, and fighting racism needs to be fought from every angle. Sometimes I feel frozen because I don’t know what to do, but this presentation helped me to see that whatever MY talents and gifts are can be useful in this fight. This means that I don’t have to be someone else to aid the cause.

Perhaps you will feel empowered by these lessons as well.

Continued on above





## READY OR NOT!

By Pastor Sherri Otto

I'm not ready! I have no decorations up, haven't baked at thing, have no idea of what gifts I need to buy, not to mention getting our tree up adorned with ornaments and lights! And the outside of the house! How should we decorate this year? Should we buy more lights and garland? And Christmas cards! I haven't even thought about ordering them!! I am not ready for Christmas to happen!!

And yet... it does. If we do not do any of those things listed above, Christmas still comes, whether we are ready or not.

Christmas comes in the stillness of the night, in the sound of a newborn baby crying in a manger, in the tears of Mary and Joseph as they share the baby Jesus with the animals. Christmas comes in the choir of the angels singing praise to God for the birth of God's son. Christmas comes in the fields of the shepherds as they followed the star to Bethlehem. Ready or not, Christmas comes!

During Advent we wait for this day when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. We wait with hope and anticipation, with longing for better days ahead, with anxious hearts and minds. And in this waiting, instead of sitting back, breathing and wondering at the awe of it all, we can tend to go to the other extreme. Rushing around, trying to get a million things done in one month, trying to please others, being disappointed when we can't find that "perfect" gift. We often rack up our credit cards so that everyone on our list will be thrilled with their presents. And in the hurry of it all, we still feel unprepared or ready for Christmas.

This December, let's pause and take in the amazing birth of Jesus, for it is here where we find hope and love, it is here where we find patience and joy. It is here where we see a baby is born on a night like no other, who is both human and God, who is the Savior of the world.

When we feel stressed, anxious and unprepared, remember these words from the angel:

"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in the manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to all people on earth." (Luke 2:10-14)

I pray this day and always, that you keep this story in your heart. I pray that you read the Nativity story this month to bring you peace and joy. I pray that, "Ready or Not", you feel it in your heart, that Christ is here, showing us how to love and loving us for all times.

Blessings to you and Merry Christmas!!  
Pastor Sherri



## WAM/SUNDAY SCHOOL New Year!-New Changes in 2022!

### More details to come!!

Excitement abounds as we hope to be back gathering for Sunday School starting in January 2022. We will be looking for volunteers to help facilitate three classrooms: Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten to 2nd grade and 3rd to 5th grade. Sunday School will take place after the Children's sermon and parents will be able to pick their students up at 10:45.

## God is at the heart continued

very guilty and very weak. But this uncomfortable solution (uncomfortable for me, that is) was a gift from God, and not only because I needed to get to work, but because I had a valuable lesson to learn about accepting help from others: that it is a virtue not just to give, but to receive and to receive graciously.

A pair of roommates who lived in an apartment building close to mine and who worked in a building next to mine heard about my predicament and generously offered to drive me both ways until I was able to walk to work again. These two women I barely knew insisted that I not pay them. This added to my shame: I should be able to take care of myself! This would be asking way too much! I felt very guilty and very weak. But this uncomfortable solution (uncomfortable for me, that is) was a gift from God, and not only because I needed to get to work, but because I had a valuable lesson to learn about accepting help from others: that it is a virtue not just to give, but to receive and to receive graciously.

So how does one put the ability to receive graciously into practice? For one thing, if your friends or parents offer to watch the kids so you can go out with your spouse on a date, take them up on it! It does not mean that you can't handle your children. What it does mean is that you value your marriage and want to keep the marriage healthy in order to benefit your children and yourselves.

If you are ill, either with the flu or with a long-term illness, such as a battle with cancer, and someone offers to run some errands for you, mow your lawn, or cook for you, don't let the opportunity go by!

**Pt. 3 Continued on page 8**



## GOD IS AT THE HEART OF ALL GIFTS

By Debbie Therrien

One of the greatest challenges for modern families is to find ways to balance our busy lives. Especially now, during a global pandemic, we find it difficult to separate our responsibilities – work, play, chores, care for children and seniors, etc. – when they often happen in the same dwelling! I feel very inept in this balancing act, and I have gotten myself into mental health trouble using my previous method of “just take it as it comes, and keep doing it all!”

I know that I am not alone in feeling this way, and I have discovered that within all of the chaos lies one of God's greatest gifts: that we have our families, our friends, and our communities as our support systems. But, in order to tap into these support systems, we need to learn to ask for help (they can't read our minds!) and – most importantly – to ACCEPT the help.

When I was growing up, my mother taught me that we did not want to “impose” on anyone: people were too busy with their own problems, and it would be thoughtless to ask for help. I vividly remember listening to my mother and her sister go on and on, arguing over taking money for a long-distance call or taking home leftover food from a big family dinner.

“I'm paying for that phone call to Nebraska.”

“No, you're not!”

“Yes, I am!”

“Dottie – No!”

“Val, you take the money!”

... and on and on ad nauseum. My cousin and I would listen to our mothers, thinking they sounded like fools and vowing that WE would never do this! I have tried to remember this lesson. And yet, I am my mother's daughter.

I believe that it is very difficult for too many adults to accept help from any source, be it family, friends, community agencies, therapists, and their churches. We have the misconception that it shows weakness to accept help and therefore, reflects poorly on us. Indeed, many of us were raised to believe that not handling our problems by ourselves borders on being immoral. I remember absorbing the notion that a good Christian prayed and was hard-working and that was enough (or should be) to withstand life's difficulties.

As many of us know, receiving gifts is not as easy as one believes it to be. I remember when I broke my leg as a young college graduate with my first job. I shared an apartment with my friend and did not own a car; rather, I walked over two miles, round trip, to work, each day. I walked in every kind of weather, including snow storms and thunderstorms. I loved it! I was young, and I had my own job and my own apartment! I was independent.

Until I broke my leg. I had two pins put into my bones, a cast up to my knee, and was on crutches for over two months. How would I get to work now? Even walking to the nearest bus stop on crutches would be very difficult, especially since this happened in the winter.

A pair of roommates who lived in an apartment building close to mine and who worked in a building next to mine heard about my predicament and generously offered to drive me both ways until I was able to walk to work again. These two women I barely knew insisted that I not pay them. This added to my shame: I should be able to take care of myself! This would be asking way too much! I felt



## WHERE CAN I FIND HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS?

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

So much has happened and not happened the last couple of years, at times hope felt far off in some unknown time. Other times, hope felt very near. And in between that, were times of wondering about hope, wondering where it could be placed.

At Christmas time, it can feel like the world around us is teeming with anticipation, which often can be seen as hope. In the church, the season of Advent (the three to four weeks leading up to Christmas) builds on this anticipation. In the season of Advent, we talk a lot about waiting. Waiting for the baby to arrive. Not just any baby, but the Savior, the new covenant where forgiveness, grace and hope are abundant. If you are not feeling hopeful during this time, it can make a low point feel even lower. It can feel like there is a bigger-than-average separation between you and others. It can add to feelings of not being seen, and a sense of hopelessness that you will ever be seen or that hope, love and abundance has left your life forever. We probably all know someone struggling this way, so how can we help others to hope?

Like most emotions and beliefs, we cannot impose what we want on others.

We can hold hope and belief for them. This is especially helpful if we can tell them we are doing this, as it helps them feel seen, expected and loved (i.e., I know you do not feel able to be hopeful at this time, I will hold hope for you until you can. Same language can be used around disbelief).

If hope feels unrealistic, we can acknowledge that, but agree to still make a list of what they hope for, removing the boundaries of reality. It is okay to name our hopes and still wonder about them. Putting our hopes out into the universe helps us hope more, and at the same time, accept that they may not happen, and grieve. Without naming them, it is hard to hope or grieve, as unnamed they do not seem real.

When you or someone you know is hopeless, sit down and name your dreams to one another. Even if these dreams seem impossible, put them out there. Get them out of your head. Share them with someone you trust.

Tell someone your story. Sometimes getting our story out helps us re-write it by seeing it from a different perspective than we did before. This change can alter our feeling about hope.

Hope has a cycle. Some days, hope is easier to hold and see, to put forward. Other days, hope is on the down turn. Sometimes hope and disappointment hold hands, going from one to the other fluidly. This is exhausting. This is a rollercoaster.

Continued above

### *Where Can I Find Hope continued*

Hope does not mean our dreams all come true. Hope means we hold a strong desire for certain dreams or wishes to come true. When they don't happen exactly as wished for, our resilience becomes hope's helper, encouraging us to look for what is good, who does love us, the beauty of a dream and the beauty in the reality of what does happen. We look for God in it, or more specifically, we look for a baby named Jesus. The hope for the hopeless.

This Christmas, I pray you will be able to find a sustaining hope. To embrace hope and not let it go. Isn't this what resilience is? For the days hope is hard to find, give grace and let others hold hope for you. Look for hope, it might look differently than what you are expecting... who expected the King of the world, the Savior, to be a poor baby? And, do what you can to give or hold the gift of hope to others, it is better than any gift you can buy.

Looking for Sustainable Hope Too,  
Kaye Wothe  
Faith Community Nurse, wishing you a Merry Christmas!

**MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT**  
**Mental Health Resources and Education can be found on their webpage:**  
<http://www.mhconnect.org/events>

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
500 Blake Road South  
Edina, MN 55343

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Hopkins, MN  
Permit No. 132

Dated Material



Glory to God  
*in the highest*  
And on earth peace, good will toward all.  
Luke 2:14