

Shepherd's Voice



January 2021

“And now, the Gospel of Luke”

By Pastor Scott Searl

By now you have likely made your way through all the Netflix movies you never knew you needed to watch! With fear and trembling, I will admit I've watched all of the Indiana Jones movies. Then I watched the Jurassic Park movies (there are three and they don't hold up well!). And I've watched far too many WWII documentaries about tanks, planes and specific battles. I've even watched Monty Python's Life of Brian and the Holy Grail... This is what happens when you are on a break from school and stuck at home in a pandemic.

Now, it is time for something different, I suggest the Gospel of Luke! Before you stop reading, hear me out. Luke is a masterful storyteller. All of your favorite Christmas scenes are taken from the Gospel of Luke. (Except for the wise men... those guys are in Matthew.) But the angels, the no room in the inn, the wrapping him in bands of cloth and laying him in a manger... all from Luke! While Mark is my personal favorite, Luke is a close second and his storytelling is second to none.

While we don't know for sure, the earliest of Christian lore holds that Luke was a physician, and a friend of the apostle Paul. We know this from a reference written by an early church leader named Irenaeus who lived between 130-202 CE. Irenaeus claimed that Luke was a companion of Paul. (Paul is the author of many of the letters at the end of the New Testament, like the letters to the Corinthians and the letter to the Romans.) Some speculate that Luke was a physician who attended one of Paul's churches. There is no evidence in the Gospel to support this, and no found evidence has supported this. None the less, the legend of Luke the beloved physician has persisted.

We do know, however, that the book of Luke has a second volume we call the book of Acts. In fact, most modern scholars refer not to Luke or Acts as two separate books, but instead refer to them together as Luke-Acts. Why they were separated in our bible is also not clearly known. What we do know is that the volumes share similar language, sentence structure, theological themes and even a connection in the text itself that alerts us to their connectedness. Put together, Luke-Acts is Paul's historical research paper into the Jesus story so that readers will know the truth!

We also must speculate about the date of authorship and the location. Again, we don't know for sure, but most scholars believe that Luke was written about 80-100 CE somewhere in the

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Intern Pastor	Anne Schaefer
Faith Community Nurse	Kaye Wothe
Administrative Assistant	Shawn Wacholz
Building Manager	Blair Prax

Church Council Members / Officers:

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Vice President	Julie Luers
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Pastor Sherri Otto	13
Anne Schaefer	14
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Emergency Message Mailbox	24
Kaye Wothe	25

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ancient near east, but we do not know for sure. It was written in Greek and was likely written to an audience that knew about Jesus, but maybe needed some help understanding some of the Jewishness of Jesus' story. In other words, they were Christians who were likely gentile converts.

As we start a new year, and are looking for hope, as a family of faith we will turn our attention to Luke. We will walk through all of Luke's story going bit by bit. I would suggest that you read along at home. It's the best way to learn the story: read it at home with your family, then come on Sunday to read more about it. You can go here https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/narrative_lectionary_luke_2020-21.pdf to get a schedule of our Sunday readings so you can follow along. Luke begins his story with a dedication to someone named Theophilus. You might recognize that Theophilus means someone who loves God. (Theo - God, Philo - To love) We don't know if there really was a Theophilus, or if Luke is writing his historical research paper on Jesus to all people who love God. Either way, it is a book for people who know that God loves them! So, it's a book for us! I look forward to reading Luke's Gospel with you. While I enjoyed my Netflix binge, it's time for something more edifying. I suggest the Gospel of Luke!



President's Post: Hibernating with Purpose

By Todd Biewen, Council President

All species in the Animal Kingdom, including humans, were created with the tools and instincts needed for survival. Hibernation is one of the tools in the survival toolbox for some species of animals. Just before winter conditions become harsh and food supplies dwindle, these animals gorge themselves with calories and retreat to a sheltered place until conditions improve. While hibernating, an animal's metabolism slows and body temperature drops so as to conserve energy for their long slumber. So why am I writing about animals, survival instincts, and hibernation? Because something like hibernation is how our species should be thinking about treating these next few months. Our species instincts for survival could use some sharpening, so I think we would be wise to mimic the behaviors and attributes of those species that practice hibernation, so let's examine what they are.

In our own words we might say hibernation requires preparation, patience, faith, and complete trust in one's God-given instincts. **Preparation** for hibernation requires an innate sense of the length of time and living conditions that lie ahead, and of making plans and seeing the plans through. **Patience** is what is required during the preparation for and entry into a months-long slumber. **Faith** is believing in something that cannot be seen - in this case that there will be warmer and brighter days ahead. And finally, **Trust** in one's own instincts comes in knowing that preparation, patience and faith is all that is needed and the rest will take care of itself. For animals that hibernate, there is certainty that they have stored enough calories, that the sun will gradually rise higher into the sky, and that the days will eventually warm to provide the necessary signal that it's time for them to emerge from their long slumber.

So, if some animals can successfully hibernate for their own well-being, can we? Can we commit, with a greater purpose in mind, to a human sort of hibernation for a while this winter? Of course, animals rely on instincts to pull this off. What instincts do we possess? For me, I don't have any problem with the first part, the part about adding calories as winter approaches. I've established that packing on a few pounds is quite easy for me to do! Other than that, I'm not so sure about the rest of it. What's your plan for these next several months? I'm thinking the way I'll approach this winter is to simplify things, to listen less to the loud voices on the news and in the state-houses, while tuning into the instincts used by our furry friends. This will require **Preparation** of my mind, body and spirit for several more months of isolated living. **Patience** and understanding that I will get through this by taking care of myself and those around me. And having **faith** that by keeping it simple and waiting, that I and my fellow humans can eventually emerge to a more normal way of life.

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President's Post continued

So, I like the idea of staying in my own den near immediate family and connecting with family and friends in safe ways, including visiting with them on the phone and Zoom. For animals, the right time to emerge from hibernation is when the weather begins to warm. For us it will be when the health experts tell us enough of the population is vaccinated. In the meantime, we can occasionally see friends and family from a distance. And finally, of course, the good news is that we won't need to actually go into a deep slumber for two or three months. In fact, besides staying safely at home, there is an irony in the fact that another good place for us to be is in the outdoors, enjoying the fresh air and open spaces, not far from the animals doing their best to stay healthy in the cold winter months.

Happy New Year. Wishing you Peace and Wellness in 2021.
Todd Biewen

Staff Reflection

Finding Hope in 2021 continued

It is in this hope that I pray to God, to bring about this change in us and in our world. It is in this hope that I cling to the love found in and through Jesus Christ, for he showed us how to live and treat others. It is in this hope that I hear the Holy Spirit's voice, in a silent whisper or gentle nudge, pushing me to courageous and new ways of doing things.

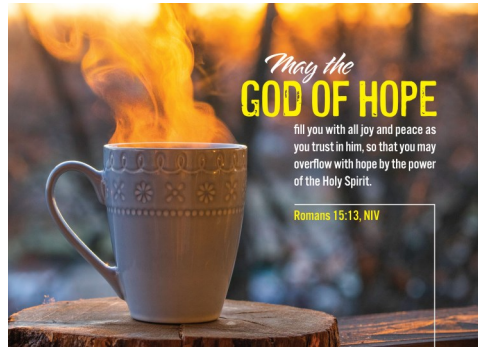
May you feel God's presence in your life in 2021 and may the hope and love of God be with you and remain with you always.

Peace,
Pastor Sherri

WITH THANKS

Dear Friends at Shepherd of the Hills, We wish to thank everyone for the prayers and cards after the death of Don Wernli. We appreciate it very much.

Sincerely, Lorraine Cushman, Barb Wernli and family



Finding Hope in 2021

By Pastor Sherri Otto

Happy New Year to you all!!

As I write this, I feel as if there is hope in the air, hope that 2021 will be different than 2020, hope that this vaccine will be distributed to all people, hope that we can once again

be physically together as a community.

In this hope, I wrestle with feelings of wanting everything to go back to normal, the way things used to be. But is that what I really want? To have things be as they were? If that is so, then what did we learn from going through this pandemic?

2020 is a year that will forever be remembered in history. A time of injustices, a time of political turmoil, a time of unrest and a time of COVID-19. Not a single person was untouched by these events. We were anxious, we were afraid, we felt isolated and often didn't know how we were going to get through this or when this was going to end. And maybe we still feel this way. But we were also called to be creative and innovative, to stretch ourselves further than we ever thought possible and to understand that we are not in control.

To go back to the way things were, just doesn't feel right. We have been changed, forced to live life differently and I believe we can take a great deal from that. We have learned that small gestures of kindness go a long way, that a note, text or phone call can brighten a day, that wearing a mask and staying physically distanced means we care for the stranger, that seeing someone through a window is better than not seeing them at all and that ZOOM has become one of the more important words in our lives.

Please, let us not forget all that we have been through this past year. Lives that were taken too soon, racial injustice, political strife, businesses struggling or lost and our mental health that has taken a toll due to all of this. Please, let us not go back to how it was, but look at 2021 as how our community and world can be better. Let us have the courage to remember and to change how we see each other, how we treat each other and how we love each other.

As I write this, make no mistake that we are not in the clear with this pandemic. Even though the vaccines are being distributed, we still need to be cognizant of those that are vulnerable to COVID. We still need to wear our masks and physically distance ourselves. But in all of this, there lies hope. Hope for a better future, hope that children get to be back in school, hope that we can once again be with family and friends.

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IMMIGRANT MINISTRY

Exciting opportunities are coming in connection with our immigrant ministry at SOTH!

In anticipation of having access to the main level of the parsonage in the spring, we are evaluating that space to determine what, if any, improvements need to be made to provide a functional and comfortable living space for our asylum seeking guest.

Educational opportunities for the congregation are planned or will have been offered by the time you read this. Events will be designed to help us know more about immigration in general and, in particular, what our role as hosts will be.

Once we have a guest, there will be ongoing needs and responsibilities. Meeting these needs and responsibilities will be shared by our partners in ACT-TC (Asylum Coalition for Transition-Twin Cities). At present those partners include Edina Community Lutheran Church, St. Paul Reformation Lutheran Church, White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church, and Jonathan House in St. Paul. ACT-TC is working to provide housing for people with a legal path to citizenship.

Here are just some of the needs we anticipate (we will also receive help with these needs from our partner congregations):

- Cleaning and furnishings
- Groceries and kitchen supplies
- Communications (telephone, internet, etc.)
- Clothing
- Translation
- Health care
- Visitation and connection with our guest
- Fundraising
- Transportation
- Spiritual needs

Please consider how your gifts and abilities could be put to use in fulfilling these needs. Then, please let me know how you would like to support this ministry.

Thank you for your support in giving hope to someone wanting a new and better future.

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

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.

For questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse at kwothe@comcast.net

Book Club Schedule

Wed., January 13, 6:30 pm,
"This is How It Always Is"
by Laurie Frankel

Wed., February 17, 6:30 pm,
"Us Against You"
by Fredrik Bachman



WEDNESDAY NIGHT SPEAKER SERIES

Date: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 from 6:30-7:30 pm
Topic: Boys & Girls Sexuality
Speaker: Peggy Orenstein

Our Wednesday night speaker for January 6th at 6:30pm is about the subject we all struggle to discuss with one another and especially with our kids...sex. In denial we tend to think our kids and young adults experiences are somehow similar to what ours were. I think you will find that is not true. Peggy Orenstein is an author who has studied this subject in various ages of kids to young adults in order to understand their current experience and barriers in the culture and experiences. We will explore some pieces of her presentations of this material to learn and discuss honestly this challenging area in parenting and even for grandparents. Please join us on ZOOM, watch for the link in the Tuesday, January 5th Shepherd email. If you have questions please contact Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse, at kwothe@comcast.net

WOSOTH BREAKFAST

Date: Saturday, January 9, 2021 from 9:00 am to 10:15 am
Topic: "10 Ways to Better Conversations"
Speaker: Celeste Headlee

The next WoSOTH breakfast will be Saturday, January 9th from 9:00 to 10:15 am. Just a reminder we changed topics last time to a speaker on resiliency. So in January we will listen to Celeste Headlee talk about "10 Ways to a Better Conversation". After nearly a year of some level of limited socialization and conversation with others, as things open up again it may require us to relearn the art of conversation, especially in a time where many subjects are polarized. Headlee, an author, radio show host, and expert on conversation helps us consider the truly important aspects of conversation which are not innate to most people. Please join us to learn and have conversation about it 😊!

Or simply come for fellowship with some really great women.

Watch for the ZOOM link in the weekly Shepherd email on Tuesday, January 5th or RSVP to Kaye Wothe at kwothe@comcast.net. See you then!

WAM AND CONFIRMATION

I am super excited to be heading up WAM for 2021 and can't wait to get to know all of the kids and their parents! There will be more information for parents coming in January as to curriculum, meetings, etc. I have some fun ideas (and educational!) already swirling around in my head. It will be a great 2021!!

Both WAM and Confirmation will resume on January 13th. Pastor Scott will be leading the Confirmation class that evening until our new intern, Anne Schaefer, starts. We are so thrilled to have her join our team! Anne will begin on January 15th. Our plan is to have her lead Confirmation two times during the month, WAM one time during the month and Adult Education one time during the month. Pastor Scott and I will rotate the other weeks. Please make sure and read more about Anne in this newsletter. As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me or Pastor Scott.

Happy New Year and God bless you all!!

Pastor Sherri

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, January 31 at 10:30 a.m.

(after 9:30 a.m. worship service on zoom)

Please make plans to join us for our annual meeting on Sunday, Jan. 31 at 10:30 a.m. on zoom. The Council will bring forward our budget recommendation for Congregational vote. The meeting will include an introduction to our upcoming capital appeal—Prepare the Pavement. We have a lot to share, so we hope you will be able to be there!





Welcome continued

God has filled my heart with this excitement and joy for what's ahead. With new vaccines, new beginnings and new years I can't help but look forward to the good that's on the horizon. I feel incredibly blessed to begin a journey with you, and I'm so thankful to be part of what God will do with our partnership.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Anne



WELCOME TO OUR NEW PASTORAL INTERN ANNE SCHAEFER

Happy New Year, Shepherd of the Hills!

It is with complete joy and great anticipation that I am preparing to meet you all and begin my pastoral

internship with you in January! While not a stranger to congregational ministry, I look forward to learning about and participating in God's work at Shepherd.

My family and I live in Champlin. My husband, Anthony and I have three kids. Emma is 20 years old and a Junior in the Commercial Aviation program at the University of North Dakota. She is following lots of family footsteps in the aviation industry. Maddie is 18 years old and is planning on studying finance at Minnesota State Moorhead in the fall. Our youngest, Jeremiah, is 14 years old and is pursuing self-designed degrees in Xbox, TikTok and Snapchat. We're hoping that Covid makes an exit before his brain is completely fried. We have a cat, Chloe, whom we adore, and a dog Crosby who is always excited to see us - even if we just went to check the mail.

We're a camping family! We love the Boundary Waters, the Superior Hiking Trail, state parks and family campgrounds. While home, we are incredibly competitive board game players (I'm always red!) and avid card players. I love cooking, baking and cake decorating, and my husband loves eating, so we are a fantastic pair. We may be found geeking-out over crossword puzzles together or zoning out in front of a number of TV shows (right now it's This is Us, Yellowstone and the Mandalorian).

I am a senior at Luther Seminary and loving it. It's challenging to say the least - both the program as well as the life balance, but I have met incredible people and began lifelong friendships. Of course I've learned a ton about God and the Church, but I've also learned a lot about myself. I have 8 classes to go on my MDiv degree, and I plan on working on those classes while I'm interning with you through July 2022.

Youth Ministry has been my wheelhouse for the last 6 years on the vocational level, but more than a decade before that in a volunteer role. While a volunteer, I felt the call to work in the Church and have worked with both high school students and middle school students in two different congregations since 2014. I love teenagers and am so thankful for what they've taught me of God. It's my love for ministering with them that led me to say yes to God's call to seminary...finally, teenagers get blamed for something good! I'm amazing at Sardines, Ninja and (my favorite) Four on a Couch...I'm looking forward to playing these games and learning new ones with the youth at Shepherd.

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INTRODUCING JOSH MEYERS

Hey SOTH, my name is Josh Meyers! I am a husband, a father of two, soon to be three, and a pastor of a new church plant, but who am I to you? I am also the owner of JM Design, I will be running and managing everything web,

social media, and design for SOTH church! I have worked on and with over 50 churches, business, and Nonprofits, on improving and implementing good social media and web presence. It is proven that 90% of people will visit your church website and engage with your content before stepping foot into your church. Online ministry has become the first seed, the front door, and the entryway into every faith community. My goal is to make sure SOTH church has an online entryway that is compelling, missional, and centered on the gospel. I am very excited to work with Pastor Scott and SOTH church!

Mental Health Connect Resources & Education



mental
health
connect

We help open doors

MENTAL HEALTH CONNECT
Mental Health Resources and
Education can be found on their
webpage:
[http://www.mhconnect.org/
events](http://www.mhconnect.org/events)

Let's Connect Thursday Thursdays, 8:00-8:45PM

"Let's Connect" is a virtual community. We meet together via Zoom for a time of connection and discussion about how our week has been, how we're feeling, and we will share resources, encouraging one another. 2020 has brought us many unexpected challenges - isolation, working from home, layoffs, missing friends and family, stress and uncertainty are just a few of the concerns we are experiencing. We NEED each other and a community to safely discuss life. If you have been longing for a group to connect with, like many of us have, join us each Thursday, beginning July 30th. A trained facilitator will lead the conversation. Free! All welcome! No registration necessary.

FEARLESS

an inspiring experience featuring

Kat Perkins



Singing & sharing stories,
supporting Mental Health Connect

January 29, 2021 7-8PM

Tickets on Sale Now!
www.mhconnect.org/events



FEARLESS

An inspiring virtual experiences featuring Kat Perkins

Friday, January 29, 7:00 PM - \$12

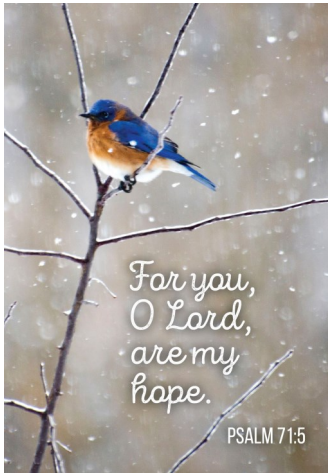
Please join us for an inspirational evening with Kat Perkins, singing and sharing stories, supporting Mental Health Connect.

Tickets on sale at mhconnect.org/events

Kat Perkins connects with her audience by engaging with them on a personal level. She inspires, challenges, instructs, and entertains all ages. Kat will speak about making fearless choices, taking leadership and following the lead, becoming the most successful person you can be, and how attitude can help you rise above. Don't miss this evening with Kat and embrace 2021 filled with hope and new possibilities!

Kat competed on season 6 of NBC's The Voice and finished as a Top 4 finalist. Since then, she has performed WORLDWIDE in over 10 countries & almost 50 states, sharing her message of being Fearless and inspiring others through the power of music.

She has been number one rock artist on iTunes 5 times & her single "Fearless" topped the iTunes charts when it was released. She is a nationally recognized motivational speaker, world-touring entertainer, humanitarian and found of her own non-profit organization, and an inspiring author.



Rewriting the Story: Looking Back, Looking Up to Move Forward

By Kaye Wothe, Faith Community Nurse

As I listened to the children's Christmas program at online worship in December, I was struck by how all my life I have just accepted the story. I know I have been sad by the lack of a reasonable bed and birth place for Jesus. As a farm kid, the stable was not a romanticized place. But, I never considered rewriting the story. Leon, in the children's program this year gave Mary, Joseph and Jesus his bedroom and he

slept elsewhere. While being born in a manger was perfectly representative of Jesus' humility, signaled his care of "the least of these" and how different His agenda would be from that of worldly Kings (or leaders), Leon's care to rewrite the story to be more loving reflects back those very values.

How do we think about rewriting our own story as it interfaces with the story of Jesus? How do we live, speak, act to reflect back what we believe, to rewrite both our own and our society's poorly thought actions? This does not need to be overwhelming; it requires each of us taking small actions right where we are as individuals and as a community. This seems especially timely as we face another January 1st and a new year of resolutions, one we hope to be very different from the last in so many ways.

I know in my personal reflection at the end of each day, week, month and year, I am painfully aware of places I have fallen short, and would like to do better, do more. In the Advent devotions we distributed in beautiful boxes this year, I found some of these things addressed. There I found I was called to "fall to my knees," a call to prayer when I recognize I am not in control of happenings around me, or need help controlling parts of me (i.e., my words, my actions, discerning direction, etc.). From these prayers, as identified in the Advent devotion book, I might be called to:

- live into each day, loving and serving others.
- always hold my hope in Jesus.
- live in community in the ways I think, care and act.
- live into the questions of life with patience, kindness and acceptance.
- see ALL people as God's children to live in community with.
- recall that nothing, not even all the mistakes we make individually and as a society, can separate us from the abundant love of God.
- remember God is with us in the wilderness of life, from the manger to the tree, Jesus is our hope everlasting.
- look to God for wisdom, guidance, and to let Him lead.
- have mercy, love, forgiveness be the words of my lips and the actions of my hands.
- live humbly, lifting God up and reflecting the light of Christ.
- trust that I am God's and be free to be me.
- adopt a new perspective of what is important and meaningful.
- let repentance reform me in God's grace and forgiveness to live into new life we have in Christ.
- give thanks in all circumstances, remembering God's grace and love.

Rewriting the Story continued

- work for the fullness of life for all, to end oppression where it exists.
- live fully present in each day, caring for yourself and others.
- create bridges instead of barriers.
- let go of fear and lean into love.
- just as Mary did, with the help of the Holy Spirit, lean into faith.
- be open to God's plan.
- pray, being filled with hope.
- be grounded in God's word through scriptures, devotion and/or prayer.

This is a long list. The question is which of these will help me to rewrite my story with God in the year ahead? How can I open my heart to let Jesus in and not send him to the barn to sleep? If I am open to hosting Jesus in my heart daily, then the rest will follow, but can I name two or three things I can do better to live into God's call for my life? This call is for every age. No one is too old or too young, too rich or too poor, too busy or too entitled to not answer this call that is connected to our life's purpose and meaning. So, take time this early January to reflect on what your resolutions are for 2021 and how they intersect with God's story for you. Have conversations with your kids, your family, your friends, your Faith Community Nurse, your Pastor and most importantly with God to discern your path of having Jesus born in your heart every day in 2021. Don't send Him to the barn.

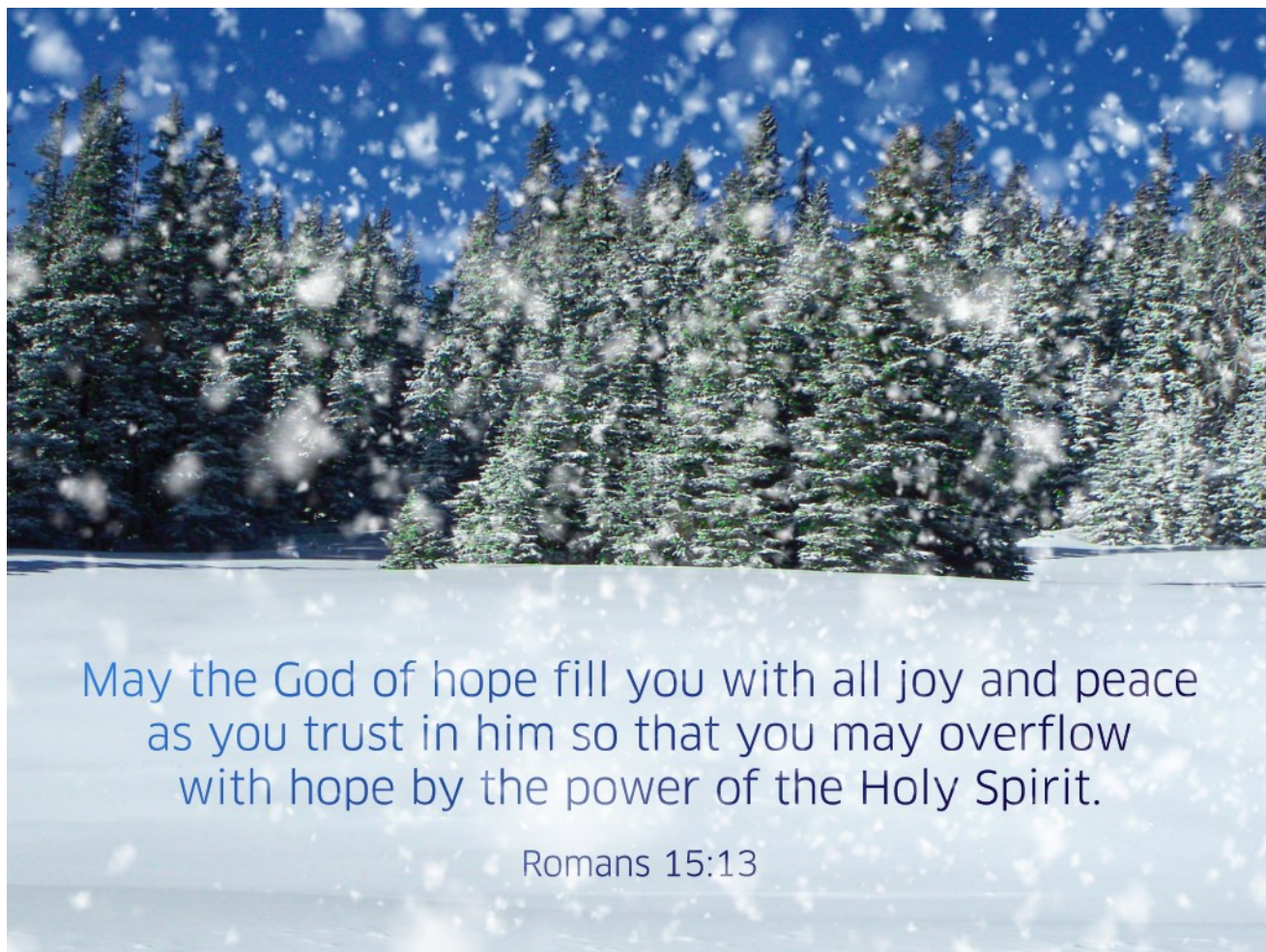
Praying and Discerning with You in this New Year,
Kaye Wothe
Faith Community Nurse

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
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May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him so that you may overflow
with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13