

AES MINISTRIES

Augustana/East Sveadahl Lutheran Churches

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PASTOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A Word, A Phrase, A Verse

For several years the Southwestern Minnesota Synod has chosen a word to focus on for the year. In 2018 the word was “equip,” as in equipping God’s people. I think it’s a little bit like making a New Year’s resolution. The word chosen shapes the work done in our Synod just as a New Year’s resolution shapes the choices one makes in the upcoming year. The last couple of years I made a list of ten bible verses to hold in our heart in the new year and always. Just suggestions that may help us place our trust in God and guide our daily lives. This, year, I’m suggesting the possibility that you want to select just one word, a short phrase, or one bible verse that would shape 2019 for you.

A verse that has meant a lot to me through the years is Philippians 4:13, *I can do all things through him who strengthens me*. I have said that to myself often and it has given me strength. Do you have a verse like that? What word/phrase or verse would be helpful to you to keep your focus on what is important to you in 2019? Some ideas: peace, be still and know that I am God, be present, kindness, love, strength, trust, praise, joy, grateful, patience, light, pray...the ideas are endless. All with the idea that what is behind the words/phrases/verses is God who promises to be with us, to provide for us, to give us strength, to walk with us, and to forgive us.

I’m going to pick a phrase, part of a bible verse, for my life in 2019. A phrase that will help me as I look ahead to a busy and exciting 2019 at home and at AES Ministries. If you decide to do this too, check in with me, and we can share how it is working for us. Whether you try this, you make resolutions, or you do neither, may God’s word give you strength and guide your life in 2019.

Happy New Year!
Pastor Kathleen

Augustana

January Circles

- Jan. 5: 10:00 am Martha Circle - Encore
 Jan. 8: 11:30 am Rebecca Circle – Encore
 Jan. 15: 8:30 am Sewing Circle – Augustana

Acolytes

- Jan. 6: Maya Kulseth, Sydney Grossmann
 Jan. 11: Levi Miest, Talyn Tande
 Jan. 20: Hayden Davis, Dylan Reid
 Jan. 27: Paris Morrow, Kaylyn Meyer

Altar Guild

Jayne Anderson, Linda Connell, Sally Engel,
 Heidi Engel, Joyce Nelson, Lois Olsen

Blood Pressure Screening

- Jan. 6: Kristi Zellmann

Communion Servers

- Jan. 6: Deanna Hoffman, Kristen Gertsema
 Jan. 13: Dominique Berg, Steph Reid,
 Kathy Eiden, Kristen Gertsema

Greeters

- Jan. 6: Ron & Becky Cobb
 Jan. 13: Adam & Ashley Johnson
 Jan. 20: Roger & Mary Jo Hagen
 Jan. 27: Jim & Jean Leopold

Lectors

- Jan. 6: Terry Engel
 Jan. 13: Kristen Gertsema
 Jan. 20: Judy Thulien
 Jan. 27: Leora Ask

Radio Sponsors

Kaethe Morgan is the sponsor of the
 January broadcast from Augustana.

Radio Broadcasts

Sponsor a month for \$65.00 or one of four
 segments for \$16.25 each. September – February
 broadcasts are from Augustana
 due to early service times.

A New Year's resolution is something that
 goes in one year and out the other.

Augustana

January Coffee Hour

- Jan. 6: Darrick & Kari Miest, Dorothy Christianson
 Jan. 13: Jim & Jackie Harrington,
 Ron & Becky Cobb
 Jan. 20: Darrell & Leora Ask, Myron & Sally Engel
 Jan. 27: Jim & Judy Sizer, John & Jeanne Miest

Missionary Sponsors

The month of January is available for sponsors.
 The cost is \$20 per Sunday to help
 support our missionary.

Ushers

Jim Anderson, Chris Bass, Richard Gilbertson,
 Chad Gronewold, Darrick Miest, Bruce Sharp,
 Steve Walker, Doug Westman

Altar Flowers

If you would like to furnish Altar Flowers for a
 particular Sunday there is a poster in the Narthex to
 sign up on. Flowers can be ordered and paid for at
 Creative Touch Greenhouse.

Transitions

Weddings

Sandra Hunter and Dwight Snow
 December 11, 2018 at Augustana

Please keep them in your prayers
 as they continue through life's journey.

Funerals

Bella Rae Connell was born into heaven on
 November 29, 2018 and a graveside service was held
 at Mt. Hope Cemetery on December 3, 2018.

Please continue to keep the Connell family
 in your thoughts and prayers.

It is not what we have, but what we give.
 It is not what we are, but how we live.
 It is not what we do, but how we do it,
 That makes this life worth going through it!

EAST

RADIO BROADCASTS

January 6: Augustana
 13: Albion
 20: First Lutheran, St. James
 27: Augustana

ALTAR COMMITTEE

Lynette and Lisa

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

George and Erma

VISITING COMMITTEE

Cindy and Lorita

COFFEE HOUR

January 6: Cindy Torkelson
 13: Mike Menssen
 20:
 27: Teresa Andrews

WELCA

No meetings in January

USHERS

Mike Menssen

LECTORS

January 6: Erma Griffith
 13: Mike Menssen
 20: Jerry Noren
 27: Dale Anderson

EAST RADIO BROADCASTS in 2019

East sponsors these fifth Sundays in 2019. Please contact Susan if you want to sponsor the June 30 or September 29 broadcast. The cost is \$65.00.

March 31: Evelyn Johnson
 June 30: need a sponsor
 September 29: need sponsor
 December 29: Wally & Phyllis Jurgens

Take time to laugh
 for it is the music of the soul.

Laughter is God's sunshine.

EAST

TRANSITIONS:

Welcome to **Brittany Lenz, Anthony Lenz, and Jim Callahan** who joined East Sveadah! Welcome also to AES Ministries.

PRAYER CONCERNS: Vickie, Becky, Pat, Wilma, Orval, Barbara, Norman, Jacob, and Chloe

STEWARDSHIP REPORTS:

Needed through November	\$60,797.88
Received through November	43,935.50
Behind through November	- \$16,862.38
Received in November	\$ 5,454.22

EAST EXTRAS

If you haven't picked up your **2019 WELCA booklet**, it is on the table in the basement. If there is a booklet you could deliver to a member, please take it to them. Thanks!

Happy January Birthday Happy Baptismal Birthday

- 1 Vickie Janzen [2-4]
- 2 Todd Anderson [2-16]
- 3 Kris Suess [2-8]
 Susan Anderson [5-29]
- 6 Evelyn Johnson [1-28]
- 7 Nathan Jurgens [2-19]
- 9 Brent Coleman [2-28]
- 11 Makya Keosaksith [4-15]
 Phyllis Jurgens [3-3]
- 14 James Nasman [3-15]
- 15 David Anderson [2-28]
- 17 Dakota Pickett II [9-3]
- 18 Terrance Bridges [5-2]
 Nicole Johnson [4-15]
 Dacen Anderson [3-17]
- 19 Jennifer Anderson [3-11]
- 23 Don Rathman
- 24 Madison Dougherty [4-00]
- 28 Jennifer Schmidt [2-26]
- 29 Dale Anderson [3-15]
 Thomas Johnson [4-3]
 Brayden Fast [2-09]
 Kaystyn Keosaksith [7-11]

AES January News

WORSHIP TIME CHANGE

Beginning on January 6th, our early worship time will change. **The early worship service will begin at 9:00 am instead of 8:30 am whether the service is at Augustana or East.** Worship will be held at 9:00 am at Augustana and 10:30 am at East Sveadahl until March. Then East will worship at 9:00 am; Augustana at 10:30 am until we switch again in September.

HELP NEEDED

Men and Women volunteers are needed **Tuesday, January 8th at 1:00 p.m.** to take down and put away the St. Lucia decorations at Augustana. Any help would be appreciated!

TLC

The TLC schedule resumes on **January 9.** Worship on January 9 at 5:30 pm, will include Holy Communion. Supper will be served at 6 pm.

AES CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

We are looking for any members of AES Ministries who would like to be a part of contemporary worship for our Wednesday 5:30 pm services. Any and all are welcome – singers, instrumentalists, musicians-guitar players needed. If you have any questions or if interested, please talk to Terry or Heidi Engel, or Pastor Kathleen. Thanks!

ANNUAL MEETINGS

AUGUSTANA ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Augustana Lutheran Church will be held on **Sunday, January 27, 2019,** following the **9:00 am** worship service.

All reports are due in the office by Wednesday, January 9th. Again this year, the reports will not be mailed, but will be available for members to pick up in various locations of the church. Please bring your copy with you the day of the meeting.

EAST SVEADAHL ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the East Sveadahl Lutheran Church and Cemetery Association will be held on **Sunday, February 3, 2019,** following the 10:30 am morning worship service and potluck dinner.

EAST SVEADAHL ANNUAL REPORTS

- ~ **January 14 – Monday** -- All financial reports turned in (Include all bank statements; year-end papers)
 - All written reports turned in (Pastor's, Property, WELCA)
- ~ **January 18 – Monday** -- Audited reports turned in

Auditors: **Wes, Sonja, James**

Nominating Committee: **Bernie, Lorita, Joann, Teresa**

WELCA NEWS

Augustana

Martha Circle will meet **Saturday, January 5th** at 10:00 a.m. at the Encore. Judy Berg will be hostess and have devotions.

Rebecca Circle will meet Tuesday, January 8th at 11:30 a.m. at the Encore.

Sewing Circle will be Tuesday, January 15th at 8:30 a.m. at Augustana.

East

There are no meetings scheduled in January.

The WELCA purchased a new hood/vent and refrigerator for the church kitchen.

WEATHER INFORMATION

With the coming of winter weather, we ask you to please use your best judgement and common sense before venturing to church events. Your safety is of the utmost importance. Please check the sources listed below for cancellations before you leave home:

For church closings at both East and Augustana – listen to FM 101.5 (KRRW) or AM 8.60 (KNUJ), Channel 12 KEYC-TV, or check the AES website at www.augustanachurch.org.

Confirmation classes and **Youth activities** are automatically cancelled when school is closed or there is an early dismissal due to weather conditions.

PRAYERS AND PRAISES

We appreciate your care and concern for family members and friends by placing them on the Prayer Concern list in our bulletins. We do believe in the power of prayer! If you have added someone to our list, please let us know when to remove their name if the need is no longer there. Thank you.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Changing your address – going “south”, coming “north”, moving – please get your address change to Sue at the Augustana office or Susan at 375-5831.

VISITS

Our Pastors would like to visit you! If you would like to be visited in your home, in the hospital, wherever, please contact them: Pr. Kathleen at 375-4792 or 507-276-1615 and Deacon Klee at 507-439-6940 or 507-227-9250.

FACEBOOK

“Like” the Augustana/East Sveadahl Ministries Facebook page for pictures, updates, and inspiration. Visit the AES Ministries website – www.augustananchurch.org.

THANK YOU

To Augustana WELCA,

Thank you for the Christmas cookies, they were a very welcome treat!

Viola Sandberg
(continued)

To AES Youth Group,

Thank you for the winter gear you sent to our students, your efforts are greatly appreciated!
Thank you for donating to our school! Sincerely, Northside Elementary

To Augustana Lutheran Church

Dear friends in Christ-Thank you for your faithful support of ELCA global missionaries and ministries. We are a church that believes God is calling us into this world - together.....Thank you for your support, and may we continue to walk faithfully together in this mission.

In gratitude-Andrew Steele, Director-ELCA Global Church Sponsorship

Dear Augustana Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your congregation's continued mission support in 2018 and as you plan for 2019. We are grateful for our partnership in the Gospel!

Blessings from Your Southwestern Minnesota Synod Council

To the Ladies of AES Ministries

Thank you so much for the Christmas cookies. It was so nice to receive them as I haven't been able to do any baking this year. May you all have a very Blessed Christmas and New Year. Lois Hultgren

To Augustana WELCA - Thank you so much for the wonderful fruit basket for Christmas! Sue Melheim

Many thanks to those who decorated East Sveadahl for Christmas. The decorations helped everyone get into the Christmas spirit. Your efforts were appreciated by all.

Thank you to my church friends for all of the cards, prayers, greetings and for everything, following my accident. A super big THANK YOU to all those that helped with cookies and making this year's St. Lucia Festival another success! God Bless all of you! Ruth Haler

Thank you to Wally and Phyllis Jurgens for your generous donation of the new stove for the kitchen. It was very much appreciated. East WELCA

Thank you to everyone who shared poinsettias at East! They are beautiful reminders of those we love!

Thank you to everyone who sponsored a radio broadcast during 2018.

AES Youth News January 2019

Grades 4-12 Snow Tubing at Mt. Kato

We will go snow tubing at Mt. Kato (weather permitting) on Sunday, January 27th. We will leave Augustana at Noon and return at 4:00 pm. The cost is \$10. You must sign up on the bulletin board in Armstrong Blvd. entry. You must also turn in a parent permission form. **Parent drivers are needed!** Please contact Dominique Berg if you will drive. You may bring a friend, but they must also be signed up. Younger students may attend if their parent also attends. Keep in mind you must be 42" to go snow tubing at Mt. Kato. Meet at the Armstrong Blvd. entrance at Augustana.

Steak Fry on January 12!

A great fundraiser for AES Youth has been the VFW Steak Fry. This is a simple way to raise funds as all we do is show up and serve and clean up. The money we raise is used for things like the Jr. High Youth Gathering, our trip to the Guthrie, tubing at Mt. Kato, and other gatherings and youth events. Please contact Kristen Gertsema if you and/or your family can work on January 12th.

COMMUNITY EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

January 6

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

January 6 is known in Christian tradition as **Epiphany**. It is the **12th day of Christmas** that we sing about, and sometimes is called the **Twelfth Night**.

Many Christian denominations celebrate Epiphany each year on or near January 6. “Epiphany”, which means “Showing forth”, celebrates the visit of the magi, or wise men, to the baby Jesus. These men, also known as kings, saw the star that led them to Bethlehem.

The fact that these wise men were Gentiles, not Jews, teaches us an important theological lesson: Their search for the Savior shows that Jesus came for all people.

In 1875, Philip Bliss wrote the hymn, “The Light of the World Is Jesus”. The first stanza captures the meaning of Epiphany, a season of light:

The whole world was lost In the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in.
The Light of the world is Jesus!

January 13

PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Watonwan County Historical Society will be hosting a Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, January 13th from 9 am – 1 pm at the St. James Eagle’s Club. The menu will include pancakes, sausages, scrambled eggs, and beverages. Free will donation will be taken. Thank you for your support of the Historical Society.

February 23

EQUIPPING CONGREGATIONS

The next Equipping our Congregations event will be Saturday, February 23, 2019, at Vinje Lutheran Church and Bethel Lutheran Church in Willmar from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm. Check the poster on the bulletin board in the Social Hall at Augustana and the narthex bulletin board at East.

OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER

Adult volunteers are needed at Green Lake Lutheran Ministries the week of June 10-16. Are you interested helping with projects around Green Lake Bible Camp and Shores of St. Andrew? If so, your help is needed! The week of June 10-16 there will be a volunteer event. Housing will be at the Chrysalis House at Green Lake and all housing, meals, and evening program are FREE! Watch for more information to sign up to volunteer.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Many local families and individuals find it difficult to pay their monthly energy bills. The Minnesota Valley Action Council Energy Assistance Program provides a grant for income-eligible households which can help defray some of these costs. This leaves more of the family resources available

(continued)

for other expenses. We can also assist households in crisis situations with disconnect notices or when they are almost out of heating fuel. Grants are paid directly to the vendor on their behalf!

Households can request an application by calling MVAC at (507)-345-6822 or 800-767-7139 or by downloading it from our website at mnvac.org.

Applications become available in early September. Funds become available late in the year, generally mid to late November. The program ends May 31st, 2019.

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2019 Green Lake Lutheran Ministries Annual Meeting will be held Tuesday, February 12th at 12:00 pm. Lunch will be served at no cost following the meeting. Each member congregation is encouraged to send two voting delegates.

EAST SVEADAHL WELCA MEETING MINUTES – December 6, 2018

The East Sveadahl WELCA held their annual Christmas party on Thursday, December 6, 2018 at 6:30 PM.

President Janet Bloomquist welcomed our guests and members. We sang our table prayer to the tune of "Your Little Ones Dear Lord Are We". Lisa Noren Shellum was our accompanist for the evening.

Committee #1 prepared a festive Swedish Meatball meal along with Christmas goodies and ice cream. A "BIG" thank you to the men of the church along with Charlie Bornhoft and Greg Klinkner for help in serving the meal to all and for washing of dishes and more in the kitchen. It was very much appreciated.

Pastor Kathleen Ulland-Klinkner led us in devotions. She talked on part of Christmas story about Jesus was ordinary. Was born in a manger. An extraordinary gift to us. We should enjoy all the precious moments and gifts given to us.

Lighting of candles and prayer by Janet to remember our loved ones who had passed away this past year. Bless the Memory of Joan Alde and Viola Noren.

Ruth Haler shared her warm feelings being in her home church and how proud of Augustana church. She invited everyone to St. Lucia Breakfast on Saturday, December 8 from 6:30 to 9 AM.

Cindy Torkelson led the program along with readers Phyllis Jurgens, Deb Anderson, Angie Noren, Lori Newberg, and Bernie Jurgens. Message was about how God's Love is Contagious. How we in many ways can share love. A token of a small jar of jam with "Love Is Contagious" written on it was shared to all by Committee #2. We are to go out and share this contagious love of God. Christmas hymns were sung by all.

Offering was taken and will be donated to the Watonwan County Food Shelf.

Janet thanked everyone for coming and sharing this special evening together.

Closing hymn "Silent Night" was sung with the dimming of lights.

Secretary, Sonja Coleman

You can't change the past, but you can ruin the present by worrying over the future!

If it weren't for the last minute, nothing would get done!

EAST SVEADAH LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES – December 13, 2016

The East Sveadahl Church Council met on Thursday, December 13, 2018 at 7 p.m. Due to the weather, those present were Tom Anderson, Wayne Jurgens and Janet Bloomquist.

Tom opened the meeting with prayer.

No secretary's report was given.

Treasurer's report was presented by Wayne. The report was approved.

Tom presented the bills which were approved to pay.

Hope in the Heartland, Imagining Our Future as Small Congregations, was discussed. It was approved that East Sveadahl will a part of this gathering. It will be held on Saturday, February 2, 2019. More information will follow.

Approved to give Christmas gifts to our church staff and pastors.

A thank you was read from the Southwestern Minnesota Synod Council and Bishop Jon Anderson for our mission support in 2018.

It was announced that Corey Sues has been hired for the snow removal.

The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.

The next meeting will be January 10, 2019 at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Bloomquist, East Sveadahl Church Council Secretary.

AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES -- December 12, 2018

Present: Dominique Berg, Lisa Carlson, John Coleman, Kathy Eiden, Kristen Gertsema, Deanna Hoffman, Steph Reid, Greg Thulien, Judy Thulien and Pastor Kathleen

Absent: Jim Harrington, Kari Miest, Paul Missling, and Kyla Schломann

President Jim Harrington called the meeting to order. Devotions were shared by Greg Thulien.

MSC to approve the Secretary's Report as printed. Financial report shows a slight gain YTD.

Treasurer's report was presented by Judy Thulien. MSC to move the remaining AESY budgeted amount of \$3,448.94 to the Youth checking account. MSC to approve the report as presented.

Pastor Kathleen:

Dates for camps in 2019 are Camp House: August 1st to 4th and Shores & Green Lake: week of June 16th. She performed a wedding on December 11th.

Guthrie trip was a WOW. Great time -- wonderful play.

TLC Christmas program was on December 12th with 65 youth participating. Thanks to all the leaders and helpers.

Lyla Klee has been a big help for her and is well received by the members.

Vacation planned from December 26 to January 2. Lyla will be on call.

AES Ministries: Meets in January

COMMITTEE REPORTS:**Education:**

Planning Christmas program.

Plea for volunteers needed for TLC. Planning for next year of TLC with planning for VBS to start in January.

Confirmation Mentors are all matched with students.

Becky Cobb will lead a Lenten Bible Study – more info to follow.

Evangelism/Social Ministry:

Working on updating addresses for our college students. Will send cards out in January.

Starting to plan for God's Work Our Hands for next year.

(continued)

Stewardship/Memorial/Finance: No meeting

Church Property/Cemetery:

Vacuum has been repaired.

Water pipe was replaced so cold water pressure is normal.

Concerns with tuck pointing missing some issues has been addressed with the contractor. They will come and fix it for us.

Youth Ministry: No meeting.

Will work steak fry on January 12th.

Tubing event planned for January 7th at 1 PM – cost is \$10.00. Need drivers for this.

Worship and Music:

Will continue the Gather service 1 time per month.

Next meeting is January 8th at 6 PM.

OLD BUSINESS:

Insurance policy was discussed. Concern about the prices. Will check with the insurance agent and get a comparison to be sure coverages are the same.

Preliminary budget was discussed. Some adjustments were requested. Will research and revisit in January for final approval for our annual meeting on January 27th.

MSC to approve 3% raises for the staff employees.

NEW BUSINESS:

“Hope in the Heartland” is a program that will be put on by three Synods and held in South Dakota. Will be televised in Truman on Saturday, February 2nd. More to follow on this.

Committee reports and financial books need to be in the office by the deadline of January 9th. This will allow ample time for the annual report and auditing to be completed.

Next meeting is January 9th at 8 PM.

Devotions: Deanna Hoffman

Communion Servers:

January 6th: Deanna & Kristen

January 13: Dominique, Steph, Kathy & Kristen

Closed with the Lord’s Prayer

Secretary: Deanna Hoffman

AUGUSTANA WELCA BOARD MEETING MINUTES - No meeting in December 2018.

A Prayer for today and the New Year ...

May today there be peace within.

May you trust your highest power, that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith,

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let His presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing and dance.

It is there for each and every one of us.

Christmas Message from Bishop Jon V. Anderson

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.

²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

³All went to their own towns to be registered.

*⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea,
to the city of David called Bethlehem,
because he was descended from the house and family of David.*

⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

*⁷And 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

The Christmas Story invites us to watch for the surprising presence of God in our lives here and now even as we remember the coming of the Messiah in Bethlehem long ago.

We often look for God in the wrong places. Today's Gospel reminds us that God works in surprising ways and works in the midst of the most vulnerable of people and places.

While we are more comfortable with a heavenly army of angels when we are thinking of God's presence and work, the one the angels are praising is Jesus lying vulnerable in a manger. God's decisive intervention in human history begins with Jesus an infant, born and laid in a feedbox.

Without Jesus walking in the world; healing, forgiving, loving, and disrupting what people believed about God and themselves, Christmas would not be celebrated. It is the beginning of a larger Story. Jesus loved the vulnerable as he grew into his ministry of feeding the hungry, transforming the lives of people who were lost, and sharing the Good News that God loves all and particularly pays attention to the vulnerable, not just the rich and powerful.

That is good news for you and me who are vulnerable and weak in ways we don't want to acknowledge but know in the "dark nights of our soul."

We don't only celebrate Christmas because God's Son was born. We celebrate Christmas because something also changes in God when Jesus is born. In the birth of Jesus, God not only begins the resurrecting work that will follow the vulnerability of entering human history and relationships. In this birth, God experiences the beauty, depth, fearfulness, and wonder of human life.

The army of angels, the motley shepherds, Jesus' mother and father, none of them knew the depth of what God was up to as Jesus was born crossing into fragile and vulnerable human flesh. Our stubborn God, who had been working for centuries to reconcile Godself to humanity, decided to take an amazing risk to restore our relationship to God and one another.

We can't comprehend the depth and breadth of the mystery of Christmas, but we gather like Mary to ponder the mystery of this birth and give thanks for what we can and do know about God and ourselves through this one who is **born in vulnerability, like us.**

(His message includes beautiful artwork. Check it out at www.swmnelca.org.)

Christmas Message from Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

Christmas comes at a descending time. The old year is coming to an end, the new year is not yet here. It is too late to accomplish goals set on the previous New Year's Day, and just enough time to realize that whatever shape or state you are in will be the shape or state in which you end the year. There is a hefty dose of "what-might-have-been." In the Northern Hemisphere the trees are bare, fields are barren, birds have migrated, animals are hibernating, the days are short and the nights are long. The earth's colors are muted, and when there is snow the world becomes silent. Sometimes during these short days and long nights I find myself thinking about the brevity of life. This conflicts with my tendency to believe that the possibility of self-improvement and renewal is limitless: there is always another day, more time, another chance. I remember watching our first child as she slept in her cradle, thinking about the future before her and, at the same time, the reality that there would be an end. The Ash Wednesday declaration, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return," became more pointed and more poignant. The cradle-to-grave progression is our path; the inevitable decline of our strength. "As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more" (Psalm 103:15).

Maybe this is why the Christmas season can be so fraught. Of course, there is anticipation and celebration, but there is also pressure and stress. Perhaps we are trying to greet the Lord's birth with our best efforts (when I was a girl, Christmas preparations were not complete until the silver was polished, and that job fell to me), but desperation can creep into the urgency to get Christmas right, to hold back the night. "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight" (ELW, 279). This is freight that Christmas can't carry when Christmas depends on us.

But Christmas also comes at an opportune time. God did not come to us that first Christmas when we were at the top of our game or when the world was perfect. Even the circumstances of Jesus' birth were a sharp reminder that all was not well – forced migration to Bethlehem, no room for the young family, born in a stall. Emmanuel – God with us – came to us and comes to us precisely at the time when our need is greatest. Our attempts to bring about perfection actually get in the way of receiving the gift. When we try to fit into an unrealistic ideal of who we ought to be instead of welcoming God into our real self, no matter how messy, then what is left on the 13th day of Christmas? Fatigue, certainly, but also the dull acceptance that life moves from cradle to grave.

On Christmas, God has reversed the cradle to grave progression. The angel announced to the shepherds:

"I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: for to you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Here is the new reality. Here is the truth. Our lives are not a meaningless trudge from cradle to grave, but a joyful journey – true and lasting joy – from grave to cradle. All our brokenness and death meet life and healing and hope in the child in the manger. His cradle defeats the grave. We are loved. We are alive. Now we are free to greet this holy season.

Merry Christmas, dear church.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

P.O. Box 151
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TELEPHONE: 507-375-4792

Address Service Requested

AES MINISTRIES

January Newsletter 2019

ANNUAL MEETINGS

AUGUSTANA

Sunday, January 27th, 2019 following the 9:00 am worship service.

EAST SVEAD AHL

*Sunday, February 3rd, 2019 following the 10:30 am worship service
and potluck dinner*

Augustana and East Sveadahl Lutheran Churches
Kathleen Ulland-Klinkner, Pastor
Lyla Klee, Visitation Deacon

