

A Mission Congregation of the ELCA
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
P. O. Box 64 - 8520 Oakes Rd - Pittsburg, Ohio 45358



First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2020

• **Prelude**

Roxanne Groff

• **Office of the Acolyte and Ringing of the Bell**

• **Welcome and Children's Message**

Pr Mel

• **First Week of Advent**

Use this blessing when lighting the first candle.

L: Blessed are you, God of Jacob, for you promise to transform weapons of war into implements of planting and harvest and to teach us your way of peace; you promise that our night of sin is far gone and that your day of salvation is dawning.

L: As we light the first candle on this wreath, wake us from our sleep, wrap us in your light, empower us to live honorably, and guide us along your path of peace.

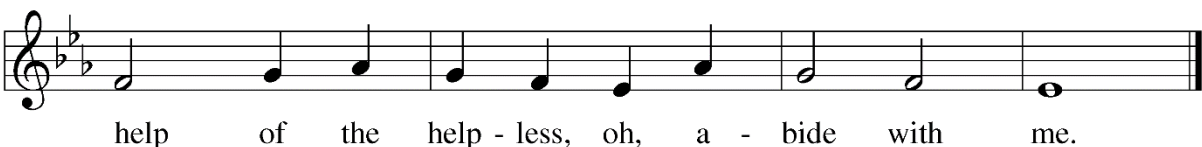
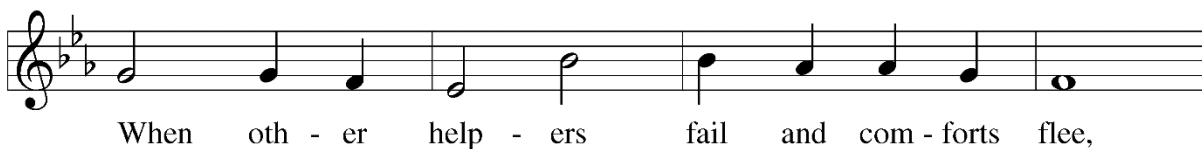
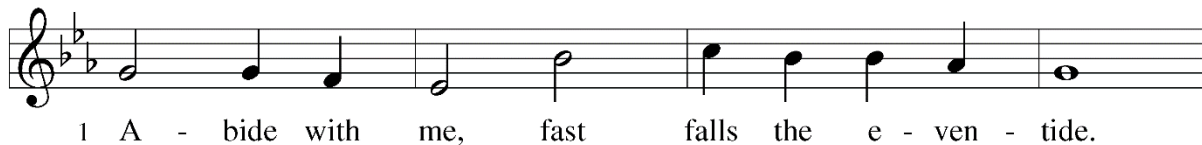
L: O house of Jacob, come,

C: let us walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.

* **GATHERING SONG**

"Abide With Me"

LBW 272



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• = Please be seated

*** CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Let us come before the living God in confession.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Renewing God,

C: You have come into our world to live among us, yet we often lose sight of this and seek to manufacture our own truth. We are afraid to share your word lest others judge or mock us. We ignore your wisdom because it isn't convenient. We allow ourselves to be defeated by despair. Forgive our negligence and breathe new life into our heavy hearts.

P: God knows our every weakness and still loves us and upholds our life. May your sins be forgiven, your past forgotten, and your hope restored in the name of our incarnate savior, Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

*** GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

*** PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: Let us pray... Protective God, You guarded over your faithful servant Daniel when his life was threatened, because he refused to dishonor you. Show us the power that the smallest acts of faith may have to influence the world for good, by the help of your Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

• SCRIPTURE READING: Daniel 6:6-27

P: Our scripture reading this morning is from Daniel, Chapter 6.

C: Glory to you, O Lord. (*Spoken*)

⁶So the presidents and satraps conspired and came to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever!" ⁷All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an interdict, that whoever prays to anyone, divine or human, for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions. ⁸Now, O king, establish the interdict and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." ⁹Therefore King Darius signed the document and interdict. ¹⁰Although

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Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

¹¹The conspirators came and found Daniel praying and seeking mercy before his God. ¹²Then they approached the king and said concerning the interdict, “O king! Did you not sign an interdict, that anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human, within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be thrown into a den of lions?” The king answered, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” ¹³Then they responded to the king, “Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the interdict you have signed, but he is saying his prayers three times a day.” ¹⁴When the king heard the charge, he was very much distressed. He was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him. ¹⁵Then the conspirators came to the king and said to him, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no interdict or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.” ¹⁶Then the king gave the command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!” ¹⁷A stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, so that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

¹⁸Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no food was brought to him, and sleep fled from him. ¹⁹Then, at break of day, the king got up and hurried to the den of lions. ²⁰When he came near the den where Daniel was, he cried out anxiously to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you faithfully serve been able to deliver you from the lions?” ²¹Daniel then said to the king, “O king, live forever! ²²My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong.” ²³Then the king was exceedingly glad and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴The king gave a command, and those who had accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. Before they reached the bottom of the den the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: “May you have abundant prosperity! ²⁶I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: For he is the living God, enduring forever. His kingdom shall never be destroyed, and

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his dominion has no end. ²⁷He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.”

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ (*Spoken*)

• **SERMON**

Pastor Mel Musser

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who keeps you safe from the lion’s dens in your life, Jesus Christ our Savior, amen.

The story of Daniel in the lion’s den is a cute little story every child learns in Sunday School. Daniel refuses to follow the bad king’s order to stop praying and worshipping God and is thrown into a den of ferocious lions where God keeps him safe and after wards the king changes and becomes a believer in God. Seems pretty straight forward and a good story for Sunday School because there isn’t any blood and gore and God wins in the end. This story of Daniel is so much more than just a cute Sunday School lesson. It reveals to us a God who never leaves us or abandons us, even in the face of ferocious lions. There is no better news as we begin the season of Advent and prepare to receive our Lord Jesus Christ once again into our hearts than to know our God has become our Emmanuel.

As I pondered this story I began to wonder if it’s really so simple. To find out, let’s look at the context of the story. The book of Daniel contains several stories of God protecting Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

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from various kings who are filled with their own arrogance and power. These four main characters in the book of Daniel seem to represent the remnant of the Israelite people who were taken into captivity after Judah and Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. By this time in Chapter 6 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have already survived the fiery furnace without a scratch or burn. Daniel, with the help of God has interpreted the literal “Writing on the Wal” from King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, now Daniel must decide whether to obey King Darius’ edict to worship no one other than the king. Prior to where we pick up the story, Daniel had been reading the scrolls of Jeremiah and discovered the period of exile which Jeremiah had foretold to last 70 years was almost over. He was looking to ride out the remaining time like any prisoner who knows his parole is just around the corner.

Isn’t it funny in an ironic sort of way that just when we think things are looking up and a better tomorrow is about to appear, that’s when the evil and chaos of this world seem to redouble their efforts to undermine our joy? That must have been how Daniel felt when he discovered King Darius had been duped into declaring this absolute edict against praying or worshipping anyone or anything other than himself. It forced Daniel’s hand. He knew the exile was almost over and even if it had more time than he thought, Darius’s order was only for 30 days. After that, Daniel would be free to go back to praying and worshipping Yahweh as

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he had been doing ever since he was taken into exile. What would you do? I'd like to say I would do as Daniel did, but I'm not so sure.

Back in April of 1999 12 students and one teacher were killed in a mass shooting at the Columbine High School in Colorado. There is a story that Cassie Bernall was asked by the shooter if she believed in God. Her answer in the affirmative was the last thing she said before being shot to death. No one is sure if this actually happened, but let's suppose it's true. Cassie had a decision not too much different than Daniel, say yes and face certain death or no and the shooter let's you go. The choice was even easier for Daniel. He didn't have to denounce his belief, only stop worshipping for 30 short days. He could have maybe even put curtains over his windows and worshipped in the privacy of his bedroom or in his basement, instead of directly in front of the window for all the world, including his enemies in the king's court, to see. Just hide your devotion to God so as to not offend others until the 30 days is over, that's all. Seems like a reasonable thing to do to avoid sure and certain death...

Obviously, I don't know what went through Daniel's mind, but I'll bet he never gave that choice a second thought. I wish it were that easy for me. When I was in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, we were not allowed to have open worship services. They couldn't stop us from reading our Bibles, but according to the status of forces agreement, we were prohibited from open Christian Worship.

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For 8 long months I had to comply. My choice was to comply or face courts martial. I complied, a decision I still question to this day. We read this story of Daniel and see how God protected him, but I know my faith isn't that strong. What about you?

Daniel is one of the heroes of the Bible because his faith never faltered. Daniel never gave in to those nagging thoughts that God wasn't able or willing to save and protect him. He wasn't willing to compromise his calling from God to please the calling of this king or anyone of this world. Daniel's total and complete allegiance was to his God. As much as I'd like to think I would never deny my faith, I know I already have, not just in Saudi Arabia, but how many times right here in the land of the free, home of the brave. When faced with a choice to worship God or stay home and sleep in, sometimes I have chosen to sleep. Even this past month, when faced with the choice to join my fellow men in the Bible Study on Zoom on Tuesday evening, I chose to watch TV instead. Every day we all face the choice Daniel faced and too many times we fail the test. I know my sin and it's ever before my face. I know I'm a lost and out of control sinner who turns away from God. I suspect I'm not the only one...

So, what hope is there for those of us who don't have the faith of Daniel? What about those who fear the lion's dens of our lives more than we love God? Can we be saved? Why would God even care about someone who hid his faith

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rather than display it? Christians have faced this same question since, well forever... In the early Church, Christians had to denounce Christ and confess Caesar was God and Lord or face being thrown to the lions. Later on, the early Church had to decide what to do with all those former Christians who did denounce Christ, but then repented and wanted to return to the Church after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

I don't know what Jesus will say to me or any one of you when we face Judgment day. What I do know is that when I compare myself to Bible heroes like Daniel, I fall miserably short. I try to live up to the demands of the Law, but I know I'm nowhere near where I should be. All I can do is put my best foot forward and totally rely on the grace and mercy of God when I fall. It's not a question of if I fail, but when I fail. So, every day I get up and I thank God for another chance to get it right and for the grace to forgive when I miss the mark. Then I try to apply that same grace and mercy to those in my life who are in the exact same boat with me. It's hard and demanding and I get it wrong as often as I get it right, maybe more often, but I keep trying.

May you have the faith of Daniel to face the lion's dens in your life without doubt and without denying your God. When you do fall short, may God's grace and mercy continue to lift you and give you another day and another chance to try

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again. May God's love strengthen you in your times of trial and temptation and keep you in his grace. Amen.

Silence for reflection may follow

*** NICENE CREED**

The Nicene Creed is said on all festivals and on Sundays in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The Apostles' Creed is said at other times. The Creed is omitted here if the service of Holy Baptism or another rite with a creed is used.

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*** PRAYERS AND QUILT TYING IF QUILT IS PRESENT**

*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

(The Sharing of the Peace that began when the congregation arrived is now shared with the Pastor at this time...)

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

*** PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

A: Keeping awake as we watch for Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

A: The perceived threats and dangers of this world don't seem as overwhelming when we turn to you, O Lord. Tame the lions which paralyze us from moving forward in faith and courage. Almighty God,

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C: Hear our prayer.

L: Turn us away from the frenzy of holiday merchandising, that we might be fully present to anticipate the fulfillment of your promise. May our days be filled with light and hope as the hemisphere enters its darkest season. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We have demonized, exploited and driven the wildness of your creation to extinction. Bless the work of all those who attempt to rescue endangered animals and protect threatened habitats. Give wisdom to farmers to use the land without exploiting your beautiful creation. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: When we feel we are most abandoned and alone, it is then that you come to us with your holy presence and comfort. Draw near to all those who are experiencing loneliness and isolation due to the Corona Virus. Speed healing to those who are sick and provide for a vaccine to prevent the disease. Be especially with those who have no one to be by their side at this time of year, and with those whose needs are particularly known to us today... Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Hold all your saints and martyrs in your eternal care, safe until the day when all the living and the dead shall be reunited in your love. Almighty God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Our eyes await the fulfillment of all your promises. The answer to all our prayers is your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ and in His wonderful Name we pray...

C: Amen.

*** OFFERING PRAYER**

While the congregation is still standing say:

P: Instead of passing the offering plate, we ask you to please place your offering in the Offering Plates conveniently located on your way out of worship. For those worshipping with us from their vehicles, there is a ceramic flower pot located near the back door of the church.

P: You give us everything, O God, and ask for little in return. May these gifts which we place on your altar be pleasing to you, and may our lives reflect the bounty of grace which we have freely received from you, in Jesus' name,

C: Amen.

* **THE LORD’S PRAYER**

P: United into one by this heavenly food, we pray as Jesus taught...

C: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

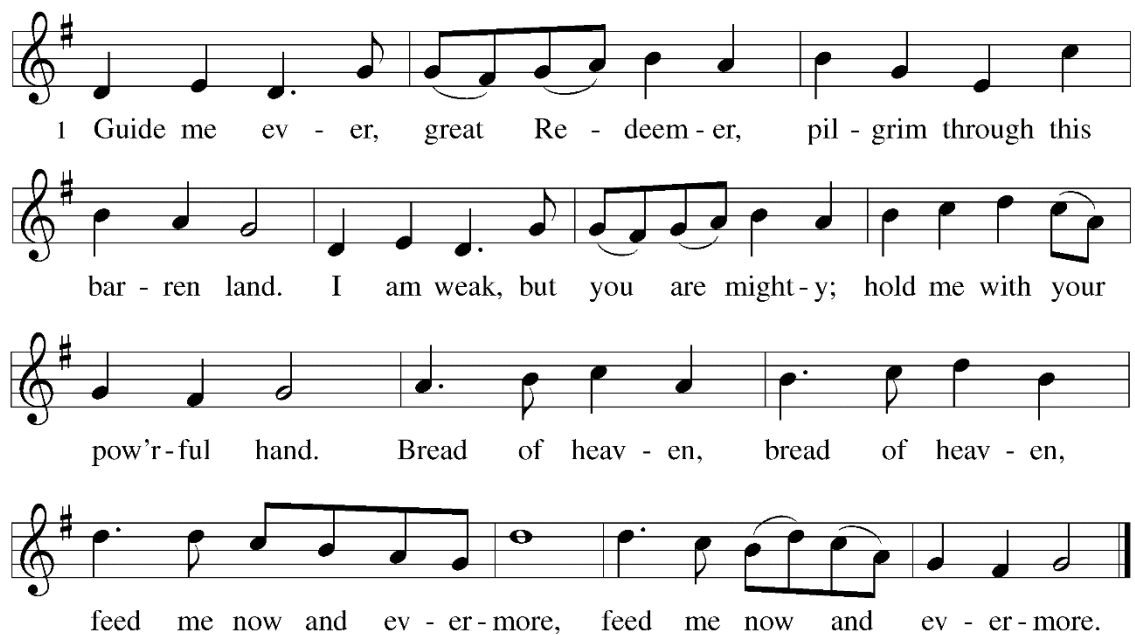
• **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

* **SENDING BLESSING**

P: The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, † now and forever.

C: Amen.

* **SENDING HYMN “Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer” LBW 415**



I Guide me ev - er, great Re - deem - er, pil - grim through this
bar - ren land. I am weak, but you are might - y; hold me with your
pow'r - ful hand. Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
feed me now and ev - er - more, feed me now and ev - er - more.

* **DISMISSAL**

P: Depart in Christ’s Love.

C: Seeking, welcoming, and serving all. Amen!

Postlude

Roxanne Groff

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Trinity Worship Assistants and Staff

Ministers	All the People of Trinity
Organist	Roxanne Groff
Parrish Nurse	PJ Musser
Custodian	Mark Groff
Secretary	Sharon Fourman
Flowers	Given to the Glory of God by Pastor Mel & PJ Musser
Facebook Live Recorder	PJ Musser

Health Tips for the Week
BODY: Take time for yourself
MIND: Read a book about history of the church
SPIRIT: Start an Advent Devotional



This Week @ Trinity – November 29 thru December 7, 2020

Sun, November 29

10:30 am Worship Service

Fri, December 4

3:30 pm FISH Pantry @ 400 Markwith, Greenville

Sun, December 6

10:30 am Worship Service

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Trinity is on the Air at FM 88.3

If you are near the Church on Sunday morning, you can tune in to FM 88.3 at 10:30 AM and hear the sermon from your car.

Silent Auction continues today. Check out the items on display in the lobby and basement and make your bid!



Scripture readings for next Sunday, December 6th
Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

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