

November / December 2021 Newsletter

Messiah Lutheran Church

1796 15 Avenue East, Prince Albert S6V 8A1

Website: www.messiahluthpa.com

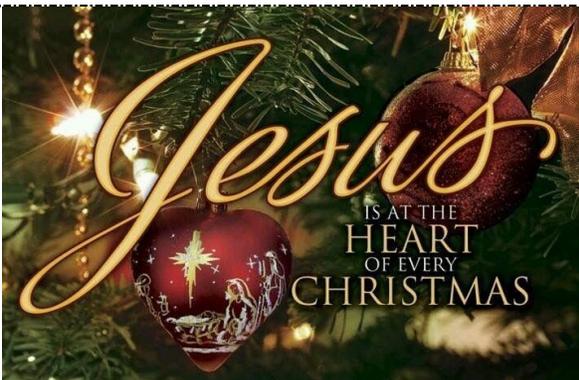
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2021 Council

Cheryl Bauer Hyde, Chairperson
Merv Bender, Vice Chairperson
Jean Meyers, Secretary
Randi Arnot
Alfred Kristensen
Shannon Pettem
Pastor Fran Schmidt

Messiah's Mission Statement:
"Through the hearing and sharing of God's Word, we, as a worshipping community, encourage a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In faith, we reach out with Christ-like caring for the community and the world in which we live."



Lectionary Bible Study & Readings

Lectionary Bible Study resumes on Wednesday evenings at 7pm, both in person and online. Ask Pastor Fran for the Zoom link.

December 5:

Malachi 3:1-4
Psalm: from Luke 1:68-69
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

December 12:

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Psalm: from Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

December 19:

Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-55

Christmas Eve

Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Day:

Isaiah 62: 6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:1-20

December 26

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Psalm 148
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

From the Pastor's Desk

Will you Worship in Person at Christmas?

There is a question asked of me on a regular basis: is it safe to worship in person?

This is a difficult question to answer. Each of us has our experience with Covid. Some feel that it is not real and is a hoax. Some have had Covid or perhaps someone close to you has tested positive. Some are living with serious after effects from having Covid. And maybe someone you know has died from the virus. Some have taken vaccinations or others not. While others are immune compromised; some cannot get the vaccine even if they wanted it.

The question of safety is not easy to answer because of all of these factors, and because how we perceive safety is also different for each of us. Just because we feel safe does not always mean it is. By the same token, it might actually be safe, but we maybe we still feel fearful.

I do not know what feeling "safe" in a time of pandemic means to each of you. To me, it means following the recommendations of the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Saskatchewan Synod guidelines and protocols. It means being aware of how often I sanitize my hands, not touching my face, wearing a mask in public spaces, at Messiah, and whenever I spend time visiting outside of my house. For me, being safe in a time of pandemic has meant physical distancing, not shaking hands, as well as getting vaccinated to protect not only myself but others, too. I feel safe when we gather for worship because we follow these recommendations. And I pray that others will feel safe as they attend services in person, too.

With the onset of these wonderful seasons of Advent and Christmas, we know that not everyone will feel safe to be in person for worship. If you do not yet feel safe to attend in person, please know that **we love you and miss you**, and we will continue to offer services on a live-stream on our YouTube channel for you. This is one of the ways you can feel connected to Messiah. Also, please consider contributing to the congregational offering. It is another way to feel connected to your Messiah church family.

If you are wondering about attending in person for the Advent and Christmas services, but are hesitant, know that our sanctuary holds 233 people, so there is room for physical distancing. And there is space here for you, if you want to come and try it out. We are being as safe as we can be, considering the time we are in. Know you are missed and that you are always welcome to attend, even if you haven't been here in a while. **We will welcome you back** with open arms and "air" hugs or elbow bumps!

Beloved of God, we may not all agree on all of what is happening, nor on all of the responses, but we are called to be faithful followers of Christ. And how each of us lives that out was certainly unique to each of us, even pre-Covid. What we know for sure, is that God has claimed us, and called us God's own beloved children, and that our unity comes through Christ and his cross and resurrection promise. So, we hold firm to our faith in these difficult times, and I pray that God continue to guide and be with each of you as you navigate these challenging times and discern how best to walk this journey of faith day by day.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

A Merry & Bright Christmas one and all!

Pastor Fran.

Advent Greetings from Messiah Council



Once again, we enter into Christmas preparations with some uncertainty around gatherings and opportunities to come together. Some of our Messiah family will attend worship services in person, while others will join in virtually. Our prayer is regardless of how we celebrate the birth of Jesus, that love, light, hope and peace will be with us throughout and into the new year.

The financial update to the end of October shows donations of \$89,000 compared to budget of \$129,000. Covid grants and wage subsidies of approximately \$30,000 have increased our revenue to \$122,600 compared to budget of \$136,874.

Careful financial management has resulted in expenses of \$131,575 compared to budget of \$152,500. Our current operating deficit is \$9,000 compared to budget of \$15,500. We ask for your prayerful consideration of Messiah's financial needs.

For those people attending worship services, the offering plate is located at the entry to the Sanctuary for you to drop off donations as you enter or exit. In addition, the following donation options are available:

1. **Mail a cheque or drop off at Messiah;** 1796 – 15 Avenue East, Prince Albert S6V 8A1. If dropping off a cheque, the mailbox is located on the south entry of the building, or it can be brought inside when the office is open. Please don't mail or drop off cash in the mailbox.
2. **Interac E-transfer using online banking;** we are set up for automatic deposit. Log into your personal banking account, and add Messiah Lutheran Church as a recipient/contact using the email address messiah@sasktel.net. Although you will be asked to enter a security question and answer, it doesn't matter what you enter as Messiah is set up for auto-deposit so isn't required to answer the question in order for the donation to be transferred. Enter the desired amount, and after following the instructions and completing the transaction, you will receive a confirmation email. After the first time set up, you can simply select Messiah for subsequent e-transfers.
3. **Pre-authorized Contributions (PAC) on an on-going basis;** contact the Messiah office for the paperwork for completion to set up or revisions to your weekly or monthly donations.
4. **Secure Online Credit Card option through the ELCIC National Office for one-time credit card contributions** – go to <https://secure.elcic.ca/>
 - a. Select the ELCIC General Fund, and
 - b. In the 'Personal Message', include our congregation's name (Messiah Lutheran Church, Prince Albert) and our address (1796 – 15 Avenue East, Prince Albert S6V 8A1). The ELCIC National Office will assume all processing costs and pass on 100% of the donation received.
 - c. The ELCIC National Office will issue a charitable donation tax receipt to you. This is a more cost-effective option for credit card donations to Messiah compared to CanadaHelps.

Please don't hesitate to contact any Council member if you have any questions or areas of concern.

Blessings,
Messiah Council

OFFERING ENVELOPES

At Messiah's last annual meeting, a decision was made to cease ordering numbered offering envelopes. The reason for this decision was the fact that, in recent years, the use of these envelopes has been seriously declined. Some members have chosen to donate through automatic debit through their bank. Others have chosen to donate by way of electronic transfer of funds. Some choose to donate by way of large sum offerings occasionally each year with or without the use of envelopes. However, some choose to use the more traditional weekly or monthly offering envelopes. Your method of donating is your business and whatever works for you is fine. We appreciate your faithfulness and we wish to accommodate your wishes.

We have noticed however that the vast majority of envelopes go unused. This trend predates COVID, but the pandemic has exacerbated this trend. Offering envelopes come at some expense and effort to distribute, but our former practice is currently seen as being wasteful and therefore unacceptable.

In order to accommodate those who prefer to use envelopes as a discrete method of giving, we will be implementing a new practice by re-purposing the leftover supply of envelopes which will be placed in the narthex. You may pick up as many as you need, or as many as you wish. You will notice that these re-purposed envelopes will have the original numbers crossed out. We would ask those of you who use them to legibly write your envelope number on the envelope. You may put your name on it as well. You may also use the envelope to indicate any special designation for your offering.

The only information on the envelope that is important is your envelope number or name and any designations you wish to make. The date is completely irrelevant. If you have envelopes left over from earlier years, it is completely acceptable to use them. The envelope number should be the same. We do keep used envelopes for some time as an extra method of record keeping. They can serve as a mechanism for cross reference in case of error. If you are unsure of your envelope number, you may contact the Messiah office or me or you may consult a list of numbers available in the narthex (your envelope number will be on the same list as your mailbox number).

If you do pick up a supply of re-purposed envelopes, I would suggest that you immediately record your number or name on the envelopes. Please write legibly.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Harvey Jacobsen
Envelope Secretary

Greetings from the Property & Maintenance Ministry Team

The Team currently has five members who look after the Messiah building, grounds, and three cemeteries. We would really like to expand the number of members so that we can divide the responsibilities a little more. If you would like to serve on this team on a regular basis or can spare some time to work on a smaller project, please contact Wayne Hyde.

This year, three windows in the Peace Chapel were replaced as the wood frames were rotten and beyond any further repairs. There are several other windows that require replacement as well due to rotting frames and blown seals. However due to finances, replacement will be spread out over several years based upon priority.

Most of the work this past summer involved the upkeep of the grounds. The lawns were mulched and fertilized in the spring; then cut and trimmed as required but usually on a weekly basis with the garden tractor by two of our members. Large overhanging branches of the north poplar trees were cut by a local tree service as they were growing over or rubbing on the building. Considerable time was spent on removing downed branches from the same north row of poplars from a couple of windstorms. In the fall, a clump of dying spruce trees were removed from the north lawn. Thank you to Dennis Serfas for taking care of the watering of the lawns. Thank you as well to Elaine Serfas, Jean Meyers and those that assisted this summer by cleaning and weeding of the front flower beds. Plans are to replant these beds next summer with ground cover that requires less attention.

This fall, the Spruce Home cemetery had trees removed from the outdoor altar area and the Hanna cemetery had trees removed in and around the grave sites.

With winter now upon us, our prime focus will be the clearing of snow from the walks, driveway, and parking lot. SHARE has been hired to clear the sidewalks after each snowfall and a snow clearing service is being used to clear the driveway and lot when large snowfalls occur.



As SHARE cannot immediately get to the walks due to the heavy demands, we are asking members to assist us by clearing the entrances if they are able to ensure the safety of staff and those entering the Messiah building. Shovels and ice melt are available at the front and south doors.

Wayne Hyde on behalf of the Property & Maintenance Team

Worship Notes - November/December 2021

Worship is In-Person and Online

We have moved into what many are calling “Hybrid Worship” whereby worship services are both in person as well as online. If you worship at Messiah in person, wearing a face mask is required, not only in worship but anytime when you are in the Messiah building. If you worship online, you can join our live-stream at the same time as worship, every Sunday morning at 10:30am, or you can access worship services on our YouTube channel at another time. This is especially meaningful for those working shift-work, for those who are immune compromised, or those who are shut in. We are glad you join us in worship whichever format works best for you!

Special Services into Advent

November 28: Hanging of the Greens

December 5: Food Bank & Christmas Hampers

Holy Communion Service and the emphasis will be on donations received for the PA Food Bank and for Christmas Food Hampers that will be put together from our congregation. Please bring your canned and dry goods to donate to the PA Food Bank!

December 12: 3rd Sunday of Advent

Service of Lessons & Carols

December 19: 4th Sunday of Advent

Holy Communion Service

December 21: Longest Night Meditative Service, live-stream and online only @ 7p.m.

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve: December 24 @ 7:30 pm: Candlelight Service

Christmas Day: December 25 @ 10:30 am: Service of Holy Communion

First Sunday of Christmas: December 26 @ 10:30 am: Service of Lessons & Carols

Holy Communion

Holy Communion will be offered during worship services on **December 5, 19, and 25**. For Communion distribution, we ask members to come to the front in a continuous, physically distanced line. We are required to wear masks in service at all times, except as you receive the communion elements, you may briefly move your mask. Pastor Fran will distribute either a wafer, or gluten-free wafer, and assistants will have pre-poured wine and grape juice in individual, spaced, glasses, which you select yourself.

If you wish to partake in communion at home, you are invited to create a special place at your table and perhaps use a special table cloth, plate and cup. You can have the elements prepared ahead of service: bread (gluten-free wafer) and red wine (or grape juice). You may wish to light a candle as the service begins. If you do not wish to partake at home, then know that God is with you, as you hear the words of promise and faith in the Eucharistic Prayer and the Words of Institution.

Christmas Memory Tree: ❤️❤️❤️🌲 **REMEMBERING:** During Advent a decoration will be provided to hang on the Memorial Christmas Tree. You can also write the names of those you wish to remember on the attached card. After Christmas, the decorations will be available to take home. If you will not be at worship services, and would like a decoration prepared, please contact the Messiah office with your information. Either Pastor Fran or Lisa will write the name of the loved one you wish to be remembered on a card for you.

The Salvation Army Christmas Kettle will be at the **Co-op Grocery store at Cornerstone this year, on SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4.** Volunteers are needed a couple of 2 hour shifts. To volunteer, please contact the Messiah office or sign up on the sheet provided in the narthex. Vaccination Requirements: Volunteers need to be double vaccinated and will be asked to provide dates of their vaccination to the Messiah office, for the Salvation Army. You may also be asked to show your vaccine documentation to a Salvation Army representative at the Co-op. Ask for their identification before providing that information.

Mitten, Hat and Scarf Collection: If you have mittens, hats, or scarves you would like to donate for local children and adults, Messiah Lutheran Women (MLW) will be collecting these items during the month of December. A box to collect these items is located in the entrance by the Messiah office or in the narthex on Sunday mornings. Please **sanitize your hands** as you enter Messiah, and **wear a mask** as per the Provincial COVID-19 Guidelines when dropping off items.

Food Bank Donations: On **Sunday, December 5,** we ask that you bring food and other items to Messiah to be delivered to the Food Bank. We will continue to collect these items during **Advent** and beyond. As well as **Sunday mornings,** these items can be **dropped off at Messiah during Office Hours.** Some of the items collected will be used for food hampers donated to local Saskatchewan Rivers Schools.



If you would like to donate a Poinsettia for the Christmas services; please drop your plant off to the office no later than **Wednesday, December 22, by 12 noon.** If you are donating a Poinsettia in memory of someone, please phone (leave a message) or email the Messiah office by noon, December 22.

Christmas Hampers for Families in Saskatchewan Rivers Schools

Again this year, Messiah Lutheran Church will be donating Christmas Food Hampers to families of children attending Saskatchewan Rivers Schools. We are accepting donations of food items to fill **five** hampers. The donation can be a monetary gift or a donation of food items.

Food items may be dropped off in a designated box in the entrance by the Messiah office and monetary donations can be dropped off or e-transferred. We would like these items by **December 10**, as they need to be put together and ready for the schools to pick up prior to the school Christmas break.

To drop off non-perishable food donations at Messiah (see the list below): A box labeled “**Christmas Hampers**” is located in the entrance by the Messiah Office. Please **sanitize your hands** as you enter Messiah and **wear a mask** as per the Provincial COVID-19 Guidelines.

To E-Transfer your donation:

- e-transfer to: messiah@sasktel.net
- In the Comments/Notes section, indicate that the donation is for the Christmas Hampers.
- Follow up with an email (messiah@sasktel.net) or phone call (306.763.7374) to Lisa to ensure it is posted to the correct account when it is received.

Non-Perishable items we are looking for:

Contents Per Hamper

- Turkey gravy mix (2 packages/hamper)
- Stove Top Stuffing for Turkey (5-6 boxes/hamper)
- Potatoes (about 2-3 pounds/hamper)
- Canned corn (2 tins /hamper)
- Can of Cranberries (1 tin/hamper)
- Pickles (1 jar/hamper)
- Cookies (1 package/hamper)
- Small item of candies (such as Candy Canes 1 package/hamper)
- Orange or Apple Juice (1 carton/hamper)
- Tin Foil Roasting Pan with handles (1/hamper)
- Can Opener (1/hamper)
- Tin foil (1 roll/hamper)
- Roll of paper towel (1 roll/hamper)
- Re-usable shopping bags to deliver the items (4 bags/hamper)

**Thank You for Your Generous Donations to Help Make Christmas
a Very Special Day for These Families!**

Gifts from the Heart 2021 Christmas Catalogue: Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)



We are waiting to receive the **Gifts from the Heart 2021 Christmas Catalogue** from Canadian Lutheran World Relief (**CLWR**). When they arrive, they will be on a table in the narthex. If you would like a copy when available, call the Messiah office and arrangements will be made to get the catalogue to you.

In the meantime, you can browse the catalog and order a gift for someone by going online at <https://www.clwr.org/gfth2021> or call the CLWR office at 1.800.661.2597 (Monday to Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 pm – SK time).

The new catalogue is full of thoughtful and creative gifts that will fight COVID-19 and make a difference in the lives of those who need it most. Although the holiday season looks a little different this year, you can still bring joy to your loved ones and change the lives of the people around the world this Christmas with a meaningful gift.

Tiny Hearts gifts such as a chicken, bees, trees, or seeds are great ideas for children on your shopping list. Last year the Messiah Sunday School children purchased items from this list.

Here's how it works:

1. You choose just the right gift for that person on your list, like a pair of goats or a flock of chickens!
2. CLWR will send you a beautiful card you can share with your loved one to tell them about the special gift made in their honour.
3. Your gift changes lives—thank you!

Three ways you can give Gifts from the Heart today:

1. Give safely and securely **online** at <https://www.clwr.org/gfth2021>
2. Fill in and return the order form included in the **print catalogue** (in the enclosed envelope in the catalogue).
3. Call 1.800.661.2597 to place your order.

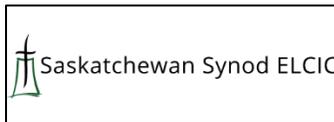
Sunday School

We continue with Sunday School on Zoom. Resource packets for December can be picked up at the Messiah office on/after November 30th. Please call if you wish your to be dropped off.

Sunday School on December 5, 12, and 19, then we will take a break over the Christmas holiday.

Youth

Confirmation continues until December 19, when we invite ALL the youth to join us for a Zoom Christmas Party, starting at 7pm. The link will be emailed out to your families with instructions for what is needed for some of the activities.



News around Sask Synod

Synod Council - October 2021 Meeting Notes

Sask Synod Council met for the first time in person since October 2019. We were masked and socially distanced in the Good Shepherd Lutheran Sanctuary, Saskatoon. (Thank you so much for providing a very accommodating meeting space, Good Shepherd). God does love irony, so Ali Tote zoomed in as his daughter's school is experiencing a COVID outbreak.

Murray Patzwald and Victoria Mwamasika, newly elected Council members, were welcomed to the table. We participated in an orientation lead by Synod Secretary, Bishop and Chair to remind us of the language, acronyms, partners, governing documents and other business that intersects with our governance.

President Bill Harrison, Lutheran Theological Seminary, joined us when we began the regular portion of our meeting. He reported that they are enjoying their new space and had their first in person eucharist that day, October 21. The first on site, in person class had been held on Monday that week. Seminaries across North America are all experiencing dynamic change. Issues of reconciliation and decolonization are in the forefront as well as moving the church away from the pastor centric model. COVID has accelerated this. LTS has received a \$50,000 US grant to help re-imagine what theological education could be and to explore delivering courses possibly at the Kamloops residential school site for example. There are intense conversations with St. Andrews and Emmanuel St. Chad about what more can be done together; 3 very small seminaries with independent operating structures doesn't make sense. There may be an opportunity to work with St. Thomas More as well through a shared library director and possibly teaching duties. The former LTS building is the responsibility of the University and no action has been taken. COVID has made physical infrastructure across the university a challenge.

Bishop's report: Bishop Sid has re-organized his reporting under the Strategic Plan initiatives. Under 'Creatively Transforming Church,' he outlined that group email to lay and rostered contacts, and the virtual Town Halls have been the main vehicles for connecting the church. In person visits, installations, council meetings are beginning again this fall with the pastoral team.

Support of Lay Leadership in Congregations and Ministries: 5 retirements have created new call processes. With only 3 students looking to graduate from LTS in 2022, there is a shortage of supply. Diaconal ministry and lay leadership can help to fill this need. Recruitment of people suitable to ministry is a job for all of us to identify, encourage, support and direct them to the resources that are available. Recruitment from across the synods and every congregation is needed.

The Fall Leadership Conference was a combination of in person and zoom attendees; 57 in person and 46 virtually. There were 26 Anglicans participating from the Diocese of Qu'Appelle as well. Thanks again to Ali Tote for his affirmation that a heavily vaccinated group following protocols could meet safely with a high degree of confidence.

The National Church Council met in September virtually again as did the conference of Bishops. National Church is working on re-establishing a National Data Base.

Courageous Innovation: COVID has taken us places we never thought we could or would go. We have been forced into innovation. Dr. Ann Salmon has been contracted to develop a network of Lay Pastoral Associates (LPA). An LPA is trained in ministry areas through the Seminary built LIFT curriculum and mentored by a rostered minister. It is designed to support a parish without a called pastor and to assist a pastor to broaden their ministry.

Bishop Sid, after consultation with the Officers, has decided to take unused study leave in January and early February. He is working with the Administrative and Pastoral teams to provide coverage.

Synod Council broke for supper and then proceeded to the Synod Office for installation of Council and an office dedication ceremony.

Victoria Mwamasika opened Friday morning with a reading of the Gospel for this Sunday on the parable of the blind man who Jesus asks, 'What do you want me to do for you?' It was a wonderful way to start our day with that question posed to us.

Iris Kristjansdottir, Sask Rostered on National Church Council (NCC), attended by Zoom. NCC engaged in an anti-oppression training session. They approved the One Flock/One Shepherd agreement among the Moravian, Anglican and Lutheran churches and will develop education materials to present this at Convention. Work continues on the strategic plan. Women of Faith Fund was officially closed; \$50,000 allocated to 19 applications and the remaining funds were given to Lutheran World Relief to support gender affirming programs. A new Mission Statement is ready for further fine tuning: 'God's grace and unconditional love calls us to be a diverse, inclusive community that celebrates all and upholds life giving relationships'. She reported that the National Convention format slated for Calgary in July 2022, is still undecided (in person and/or virtual format). The format and status of Covid uncertainty may be contributing to the low number of Sask Synod delegate nominations received to date.

Iris as chair of the Candidacy Committee, also brought up issues for further discussion. The Clinical Pastoral Education (internship in a congregation) component of the student's education is a problem. It is a Synod requirement before graduation. The Committee recommends that

this requirement be reviewed. Bishop Sid acknowledged that the Conference of Bishops have been talking about this and the requirement may fit into the First Call program.

Synod Council moved to extend the deadline for nomination of 2022 National Convention delegates to January 31, 2022. Council members were encouraged to submit their nominations, and to encourage others throughout the Synod. The topic will be brought up in the next virtual Town Hall.

Treasurer, Lyndon Carlson reported on the financial position of the Synod. Thanks to government grants and faithful giving by our churches, our financial position is holding steady. Revenues and expenses are as predicted; travel costs are still low. Synod Council approved the revised Investment Policy, and the Finance & Audit Committee which includes the Investment Management Committee will investigate the use of ELFEC as an investment partner.

Synod Committee memberships were reviewed. New terms will begin January 1. Work will continue to fill vacant positions, and Council members were asked to identify people that may be interested in Synod committee work. Thank you to retiring committee members for their service to our church.

The Compensation Committee, chaired by Sean Bell, brought forward their proposal for mileage and salary grid increases for 2022. We acknowledge the difficult times churches are facing due to many factors, but agreed that pastors should not bear all of the inflationary cost. The committee had proposed a three-year scale to help congregations with planning, but COVID continue to create much uncertainty. It was agreed that the recommendation be for one year in the event that inflation pressures recede. There are also taxation issues if the mileage rate exceeds CRA guidelines. Motions were passed for 2022, the Rostered Salary Grid increase be set at 2 %, and travel mileage reimbursement increased to \$0.53.

A motion to thank Ali Tote for his continued service to the Synod on the pandemic information and interpretation was supported unanimously.

Synod Council will meet virtually in December/January, and hopefully in person at Luther College, Regina, on March 17 / 18, 2022.



Prepare your heart and soul for Christmas, with a prayer! I'll email you a concise, meaningful prayer each morning, along with a picture to ponder and a bit of scripture to meditate upon. It's free, and your email address remains confidential. Click on this link: <https://mailchi.mp/telus/advent-2021-landing-page> or send me an email with "subscribe" in the title: pbprayer@telus.net

Advent blessings to you! Rev. Bruce Ehlert