

Trinity Valley Tribune

Gilman ~ St. John's ~ Spring Lake

www.TVLPSV.COM

December 2023

Mission Statement

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Trinity Valley Lutheran Parish is united to increase the vitality of our individual congregations by joining our talents and resources. Together we can better serve one another, share God's goodness, Sacrament, and bring Christ to our neighbors.

Church Locations

Gilman Lutheran Church

N8107 330th St.
PO Box 386

St. John's Lutheran Church

S520 Church Ave.
PO Box 336

Spring Lake Lutheran Church

N7724 County Rd B
PO Box 386

Spring Valley, WI 54767

715-778-5935

Office hours : Mon.-Thurs.: 9am-noon Closed Dec 25th

Friday—closed

December Events

Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday the 24th

At St. John's 9am

Candlelight At Spring Lake 4pm

Everyone welcome!

Christmas Day Worship

Monday the 25th

Candlelight At Gilman 9am

Everyone Welcome!

Parish Council Meeting

Sunday the 3rd

After service at Gilman

December COUNCIL MEETING

Spring Lake Council—5:30 pm

Gilman & St. John's—6:00 pm

December 12th @ St. John's

Let It Begin With Me

Happy Advent! Of all the things that I say on Sunday mornings – and I talk a LOT on Sunday mornings – some of my most sincere words are from the prayer I share before the sermon: *Gracious God, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight.*

These words are from Psalm 19, and they are powerful. I believe it says that we promise to make our words and thoughts reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ. This prayer doesn't ask for God to supervise or control me. Neither does request punishment or shame for when we fall short. I believe it asks God to help me keep my promise as I to strive to follow Jesus in word and deed.

As we light the Advent wreath on Sundays this year, we will join in singing the following, the hymn, "Let There Be Peace on Earth":

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me;
let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With God our Creator, we are family. Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With ev'ry step I take let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!*

My prayer for our parish the Christmas season is that this message be the intention for each of us when we pray: *Let my words and thoughts reflect the Gospel of Jesus every day.* And with the chaos of war and division flooding our world, I believe every Christian could interpret the Gospel in the words, *Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!*

Following and living like Jesus, The Prince of Peace, certainly does NOT guarantee that our message will take hold of the hearts and minds of others. But we can live in the hope that our message of peace will plant seeds, cause the pause, encourage reflection, and spotlight an option to the love of hate and the religion of rejection of all who don't look, act, think, and worship like us.

As I recently read, we don't come to worship to find God but to find God everywhere. That's a real challenge. And too often I hear from those that reject Christianity that they're okay with Jesus, but they do not find his teachings reflected in his followers. They don't believe us when they hear our prayer, *Gracious God, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight.* One friend of mine said that he was okay with what he witnessed during the worship service, but it was what he heard churchgoers say in during coffee hour and in the parking lot after church that convinced him to stop attending worship.

So here's a reminder as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. May we be genuine when we pray for the desire to speak and act like Jesus Christ. May we not simply sing about peace, but embody it in our decisions and actions.

Dear Friends, may there be peace on earth – the peace of Christ that is unconditional and otherworldly – and may it begin with you and me this Christmas and remain our touchstone until Christ's triumphant return.

Peace and Love ya bunches,
Pastor Bob
Interim Pastor Bob Friese



Advent, Christmas and Epiphany blessings to you from Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson, Synod Ministers, Elizabeth Bartsch, Sara Villarreal Bishop, Diane House, Lidix Montoya, Randy Olson, Laura Ramlow

Mary the Brave: Mary the God Bearer

As a young pastor and working mom, I struggled with the challenges of balancing work and home life, often while carrying a child in my womb, arms, on my hip, in a front or back baby pack, or car seat. Now my children are adults, and I have the joy of watching them carry my grandchildren. They do it differently than I did, their car seats are much nicer than the ones we had, but like us, they carry their children with much love.¹ I am still carrying my adult children and grandchildren and will always carry them, in my heart with much love. This Advent and Christmas season I'm reflecting on Mary, the God bearer. (In Greek it's Theotokos² .) Mary carried Jesus. Like all parents she carried her child with love, but she is also the God bearer. It was a brave thing Mary did to bear God into the world. To love is a brave thing. It is a brave thing to become a parent. Mothers put their own lives at risk bearing a child in their womb and giving birth. It requires a measure of bravery for parents to bring a child into this world filled with the bad news of climate disasters, gun violence, war, political upheaval, racism, food/water insecurity, and escalating health and higher education costs. History has painted Mary to be quiet, meek and mild, submissive to God's will, but a closer read shows us that Mary was brave. Mary was neither meek nor superhuman.³ She had grit. She was faithful, courageous, strong and brave. Most of all, she was human. Her encounter with the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God made her brave. She knew that her pregnancy was dangerous and she could die giving birth. She also knew that as an unmarried teenaged mother it would cause upheaval in her family and community. She would give birth to Jesus during Roman occupation, a time of political unrest. Mary was brave. Her encounter with the living God made her brave Her encounter with God gave her bravery and the faith to see that if God was calling her God would also protect her. It revealed to her that God chooses the people on the margins, those overlooked and underestimated. Bearing God in the world was to bring good news and hope to those oppressed. May Mary, the God Bearer, inspire us all to be brave! This Advent and Christmas season, I invite you to be Theotokos, God Bearers. I invite you to carry the good news of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection to all those we meet on this journey of life and the love of Jesus in your hearts always. Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Luke 1: 26ff In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you... "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High,... the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God... For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

AN UNPRECEDENTED GIFT

Advent and Christmas Greetings from

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

Jesus is God's **unprecedented gift of love** for a world in great need. Friends, we live in unprecedented times. The word "unprecedented" means *never done or known before*. In recent years we've heard of the unprecedented effects of climate change causing more powerful hurricanes and devastating wild fires. We lived through an unprecedented pandemic, and we lament the unprecedented death toll from mass shootings in our country. We worry about the stability of our democracy after an unprecedented political insurrection at our own capital. At times it feels as though we are reeling from one unprecedented disaster to the next. How do we live as people of faith in this time and place? How do we put our Christian faith into action? What if we countered with **unprecedented goodness**?

This is a true story of **unprecedented goodness**.

On March 23, 1847, at a meeting in Skullyville, Indian Territory (Oklahoma), a group of tribal members from the Choctaw Nation, missionaries, and traders heard the news about what was happening far away across the Atlantic in Ireland, the Great Famine. The result was an unlikely, **unprecedented friendship between the Choctaw and the Irish**. Historians estimate that more than a million Irish people died between 1845-1851 from hunger and hunger related diseases. The Choctaw, deeply moved by this story of people they have never met, collected \$174, an incredibly amount of money considering the Choctaw's own poverty due to the fact that they had been forcibly removed from their land by the U.S. government by an unprecedented act of cruelty just a little over ten years earlier. At the time of the donation many Choctaw were living in poverty with inadequate house and food. One historian writes, "It is difficult to imagine a people less well-positioned to act philanthropically." Records show that the donation was sent to New York City to buy grain and food that was shipped across the Atlantic. Seven Irish newspapers published an account of the generous Choctaw. Why were the Choctaw so compassionate and generous? Why are we so surprised by their generous gift? Perhaps the Choctaw and the Irish were connected by their common experience of colonization, mistreatment and suffering.

Ireland had been colonized by England and forced into a land tenure system that enabled English landlords to gain profit from the Irish tenants farmers while leaving the farmers destitute. Tenant farmers raised crops to pay the landlord's rent and to feed their own families they grew potatoes. A disease, blight, to the potato plant caused the famine. The English refused to help and often blocked aid to the Irish.

The Choctaw were forced from their tribal territory by the U.S. government when President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The Choctaw were tricked and threatened into ceding 25,000 square miles of their land in Mississippi and were forced to walk 500 miles to Indian Territory now Oklahoma.

. Thousands of Choctaw died during that winter's blizzards from disease, and starvation walking what is now called the Trail of Tears and Death. With that memory still in their lived experience, the Choctaw had compassion and collected money (\$174) to be sent to those who were also suffering a great injustice 4,000 miles away in Ireland. It was truly a gift of unprecedented goodness, unprecedented generosity.

This story was largely forgotten until 1990 when an Irish writer uncovered it and began to connect with the Choctaw in Oklahoma. It began by Irish citizens joining members of the Choctaw to walk the Trail of Tears and members of Choctaw traveling to Ireland to join in a commemorative Famine Walk. Later there was a visit by the Irish prime minister to Oklahoma and in gratitude for the earlier gift offers of scholarships to pay for Choctaw students to study in Ireland.

God sent Jesus into our broken, fallen world. Jesus is God's gift of unprecedented love. Jesus is a gift we desperately needed and did nothing to deserve, a gift we could never repay, a gift that transforms our despair and gives us hope.

Advent/Christmas 2023: May this season inspire us to give generously to those who have experienced injustice and live with great need in response to God's unprecedented gift of generosity to us.

In Jesus' name, AMEN

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

“We are never too poor to give or too rich to receive.”² a favorite proverb of Bishop Joseph Bvumbwe, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malawi

Jesus also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.³ He said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.”⁴ For they all offered their gifts out of their wealth. But she, out of her poverty, put in everything she had to live on. Luke 21:2-4



FOOD PANTRY HOUR

Spring Valley: 2nd & 4th Wed.

10-11:30am & 4:30-6pm

Elmwood:

1st Tues. 3-6pm

3rd Tues. 9-11am

Last Saturday of each month 9-11am

WELCA NEWS

GILMAN:

Church Potluck:

December 14th @ 12:00pm

At Gilman Lutheran Church

SPRING LAKE:

No meetings until April 2024

Welcome Home in Elmwood

GRACE PLACE

Thank you to Spring Lake Lutheran Church for supplying the casseroles to Grace Place on November 10th. Volunteers for November were Trudy Rue, Sally Pierce, Kathy Nyeggen, and Kim Davis

The Gilman Lutheran Church will be supplying casseroles for Grace Place on December 8th. Volunteers for December are: Linda Price, Betty Wall, Charlotte Wentlandt, and Casey Hannock.

Spring Lake's signup sheet for grace place 2024 is located on the bulletin board in the church entry-way and will be providing the meals in January.

Annual Meetings

Gilman— February 4th

St. John's— February 11th

Spring Lake— February 18th

Reports are due to the office by January 14th.

All meetings are to be held at each church after service

Housekeeping Items

This **newsletter** is primarily sent out by email. If your email changes, please contact the Parish office at **Bookkeeper@tvlpv.com** with the new email address.

If you do not have an email address and are not currently receiving the newsletter via mail, please call **715-778-5935** to be added to list for the newsletter to be mailed to you.

**September & October FINANCIALS
& ATTENDANCE**

GILMAN: Sept GIVING
\$10,041.00
EXPENSE
\$3,995.36
ATTENDANCE
112

ST. JOHN'S: Sept GIVING
\$7,530.00
EXPENSE
\$6,819.30
ATTENDANCE
171

SPRING LAKE: Sept GIVING
\$3,082.00
EXPENSE
\$3,106.73
ATTENDANCE
52

GILMAN: October GIVING
\$11,494.00
EXPENSE
\$6737.98
ATTENDANCE
207

ST. JOHN'S: Oct.. GIVING
\$8,924.00
EXPENSE
\$9,735.95
ATTENDANCE
256

SPRING LAKE: Oct. GIVING
\$3625.00
EXPENSE
\$4,311.89
ATTENDANCE
69

WORSHIP SCHEDULE
**ALL WORSHIP SERVICES WILL BE
AT 9:00 AM**

OCTOBER

10-1 Gilman—**3rd Grade Bibles**
10-8 St. John's
10-15 Spring Lake - Fall Festival
10-22 Gilman - Fall Festival (**10:30 am**)
10-29 St. John's - **Confirmation / Reformation
Sunday - Wear red**

NOVEMBER

11-5 Gilman
11-12 St. John's
11-19 Spring Lake
Wed. 11-22 Emmaus Thanksgiving Eve Worship
11-26 Spring Lake

DECEMBER

12-3 Gilman
12-10 St. John's
12-17 Spring Lake
Sunday 12-24 St. John's 9:00 am - Christmas Eve
Sunday 12-24 Spring Lake 4:00 pm - Christmas Eve
Monday 12-25 Gilman 9:00 am - Christmas Day
Wed. 12-27 No worship
Sunday 12-31 Gilman

JANUARY

1-7 Gilman
1-14 St. John's
1-21 Spring Lake
1-28 St. John's

FEBRUARY

2-4 Gilman - Annual Meeting to follow
2-11 St. John's - Annual Meeting to follow
2-18 Spring Lake - Annual Meeting to follow
2-25 Spring Lake

Wednesday Evening Worship 7pm at St. John's