**baptism of our lord sunday- January 10, 2021**

**zion evangelical lutheran church, philipsburg**

Welcome to everyone on this Baptism of our Lord Sunday where we continue to gather in love for one another from the safety of our homes. Today we celebrate baptism, I invite you to gather a small dish of water to remember your own baptism this morning.

We remember in our prayers this morning lifelong Zion member Eileen Hartung who died on January 7. Visitation will take place at the Futher-Franklin Funeral Home in Wellesley from 2-4 on Monday January 11. Please phone ahead to book a time to attend the visitation. A private service will take place on Tuesday afternoon at 1:00 with burial to follow at Zion. We also remember Ruth Little, sister of David Doering and a relative of many in the congregation who died on January 7th as well after a battle with cancer. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May Eileen and Ruth rest in peace. Amen.

The Messenger was sent out by email on Friday, if you receive a paper copy it should arrive next week.

Our goto meeting coffee hour takes place today at 11, please consider joining us!

Thank you so much for your monetary support and prayers in 2020. Zion ended the year on a positive note for which we are grateful.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

the fountain of living water,

the rock who gave us birth,

our light and our salvation.

**Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,

we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

*Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks, and folks may dip their fingers into their water and make the sign of the cross on their forehead.*

We give you thanks, O God,

for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters

and by your Word you created the world,

calling forth life in which you took delight.

Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.

Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.

At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons,

making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.

We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life,

and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.

Shower us with your Spirit,

and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.

To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord

in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Holy God, creator of light and giver of goodness, your voice moves over the waters. Immerse us in your grace, and transform us by your Spirit, that we may follow after your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized* (ELW 304)**

1 Christ, when for us you were baptized,
God's Spirit on you came,
as peaceful as a dove, and yet
as urgent as a flame,
as urgent as a flame.

2 God called you, "My beloved Son";
you are God's servant true,
sent to proclaim the reign of heav'n,
God's holy will to do,
God's holy will to do.

3 Straightway and steadfast until death
you then obeyed the call
to serve with free and willing heart,
to give your life for all,
to give your life for all.

4 Baptize us with your Spirit, Lord;
your cross on us be signed,
that likewise in God's service we
may perfect freedom find,
may perfect freedom find.

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1-5**

A reading from Genesis.

1In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**PSALM: Psalm 29**

 1Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
 2Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God’s name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
 3The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of  glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
 4The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.
 5The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
 6the Lord makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
 7The voice of the Lord bursts forth in lightning flashes.
 8The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
 9The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
  And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, “Glory!”
 10The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forevermore.
 11O Lord, give strength to your people; give them, O Lord, the blessings of peace.

**SECOND READING: Acts 19:1-7**

A reading from Acts.

1While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. 2He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3Then he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” 4Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—7altogether there were about twelve of them.

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:1-11**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**1**The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. **2**As it is written in the prophet Isaiah “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  who will prepare your way;**3**the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  make his paths straight,’”4John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”
 9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 11And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

 Year B in the Revised Common Lectionary focuses on the Gospel of Mark, which was the first of the Synoptic Gospels and believed to be written in 70 CE. The gospel does not open with the birth of Jesus Christ, like Matthew and Luke. It begins with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, which we are commemorating today. John had been baptizing many of his followers proclaiming the need for repentance and forgiveness of sin. In the waters of the Jordan followers of God were given new life, they were given an opportunity for truth-telling, to reflect on what it means to repent, to ask for forgiveness fully understand and live one’s life anew. John foretells of Jesus’ arrival knowing that “the one who is greater than I is coming after me, I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:7-8). The people knew that a king was coming, but little did they know he would arrive days later at the very spot where they had stood and asked to be baptized by John. In the wilderness, in the river Jordan is where Jesus’ ministry began. For centuries, many theologians and scholars have challenged one another as to why Jesus would need to be baptized. Jesus was sinless. There was no need for him to be forgiven, so why would the light of the world, God’s only Son, need or want to be baptized?

 The answer may come to us in verse 10 where it states, “And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart, and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.” The heavens did not just quietly separate, like the turning of a page in a book. They were torn open with force, power, and authority. God was let loose in the world through the person and humanity of Jesus Christ. At that moment, there was no longer a distant God. God was present in the wilderness; God was let loose in the fringes of society where no one wanted to travel, God was let loose in the back alleys and darkened streets. God was let loose in the injustice, in the pain and suffering of the world through the baptism of God’s only Son our Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit, through the appearance of a gentle dove winged in flight. And as the dove flew a voice came from heaven could be heard saying, “You are my Son, the Beloved; With you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

 In his baptism, Christ received his identity as a beloved child of God, and we are the same. In the life-giving waters of our baptism, we too are given our identity as beloved children of God. In our baptisms, we die to our old selves and are made new in the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. In baptism, we are chosen by God through no means of our own. There is nothing we can do to receive God’s promise. There is nothing we can do to receive God’s love. We are loved, we are worthy, and we are enough.

 Many of us were hoping for a calm and ordinary start to 2021 because 2020 was well….a year that we were all ready to be done with. But the first 10 days of the New Year have been anything but ordinary and calm. In fact, there is a meme on Facebook that I could not help but laugh at, it said “I’d like to cancel my subscription to 2021, I’ve experienced the 7-day free trial and am not interested.”

 We live in such challenging times right now. COVID numbers are dramatically increasing in our province, lockdowns will more than likely continue on for longer than what was first expected, and more and more outbreaks are happening in our long-term care homes and retirement homes. And I am sure that I do not need to remind anyone of the events that transpired in the United States this past week. To see insurgents climbing over barricades with guns and flags bearing Christian and Confederate symbols to storm the Capitol building. To hear windows breaking and see people forcefully entering doors in the pursuit of revolt against democracy brought emotions of fear and disbelief for the many millions of people who watched on their computer screens or televisions. As a Canadian watching the happenings, I felt relief that it was not our own country embroiled in terror, but there were protests in Canada as well. How do we as Christians reconcile acts like that of what we witnessed this past week? How do we reconcile the anger, the rhetoric, the entitlement, the racism, and the pride of those who stormed the Capitol and those who protested here in Canada? Is God still loose in the world when events like this happen?

 Our baptism provides us with our identity as God’s beloved children. We are provided with blessings upon blessings in the name of Jesus Christ. But our baptism also comes with responsibility and conviction, a responsibility to live out the good news of the gospel, to love our neighbours as ourselves regardless of colour, gender, race, or creed, to stand with those who live in the wilderness, those who live on the fringes of society. We are called to stand against violence and hate, to treat all of God’s children with dignity and respect, so that all may live an abundant life in Jesus Christ.

 This morning I invited you to remember your baptism by dipping your finger in water and making the sign of the cross on your forehead. In doing so, we are reminded of the Holy Spirit, the breath of God in, through, and around us, which allows us to breathe God in and breathe out our service and love to the world, a world that is in desperate need of hope and promise. In making the sign of the cross we are reminded that God is still loose in our world, tearing the heavens apart with God’s promise of love for all. That is the good news of Jesus Christ! Let it be so. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY *When Jesus Came to Jordan (elw 305)***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJEMg_fpB6U>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need. *A brief silence.*

For the church throughout the world and its leaders, that guided by the Holy Spirit they proclaim the forgiveness of sins, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For wilderness and water, wind and wild beasts, and all living things on earth, that God’s goodness is revealed through creation and faithful stewards care for all God has made, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the nations of the world and their leaders, that democracy is upheld amid the turmoil of protest and insurrection. We pray for the United States as they deal with the impact of the events on Capitol Hill earlier this week. We pray for peacemakers working amid strife, racism, and injustice, that God will inspire all people to use their strength wisely, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the sick and injured and those who provide medical care, for the imprisoned and those who show them mercy, for the lonely and those who provide companionship. We remember all who suffer, especially Eddy, Elaine, Susie, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Joe, Greg, Tyler, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Diane, the family of Eileen Hartung and the family of Ruth Little and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. May God shower healing and compassion upon them, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For long term care and retirement homes that continue to battle against Covid 19, for staff who are working so hard to contain outbreaks and keep residents safe. We remember Caressant Care in Listowel, Greenwood Court in Stratford, Nithview in New Hamburg, The PeopleCare in Tavistock, and all other homes in outbreak. Continue to make vaccines available to all who want them, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For our congregations scattered in our homes, for students, parents, and teachers, trying their best during this time of online learning, for those seeking renewal in their daily work, that all the beloved of God experience grace and peace, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their labors, that their witness inspires us in our baptismal vocations. We especially remember Eileen Hartung, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

May God the creator strengthen you, Jesus the beloved fill you, and the Holy Spirit the comforter + keep you in peace. **Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*God, Whose Almighty Word* (ELW 673)**

1 God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

2 Christ, who once came to bring,
on your redeeming wing,
healing and sight;
health to the troubled mind,
sight where illusions blind;
oh, now to humankind
let there be light.

3 Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light.

4 Holy and blessed three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might:
boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,

through the earth, far and wide,
let there be light.

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