

PRINTS *of* PEACE

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FROM YOUR PASTOR'S DESK - January 2021



Dear members of Prince of Peace

On New Year's Eve many churches have a Watch Night service where the faithful are encouraged to look to the year that is passing and make confession for their failures. They are also encouraged to make plans for the coming year. African American parishes also use the occasion to remember the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation which went into effect on 1 January 1863. When I was growing up we were reminded that "for everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven."

We will not be having a service on this New Year's Eve but the sentiment is still appropriate. This has been a unique year in our lives but we have come through it and it looks as though next year will be better although there are still many things that need improvement in our lives and culture.

I want to start this letter by saying a big thank you to all of you. Despite the virus and limits on gatherings we as a congregation have survived. We have not had the fund raisers that we normally have. We have had fewer people attending services due to limits on gatherings. But we have survived.

In fact we have done better than most congregations. Yes, we did have to cut many programs due to the virus but we were able to continue to worship. We have started to put our services on line and we plan on continuing to do so in the future so people who could not attend physically could be part of our worshipping community.

And you, the members of the Prince of Peace parish have stepped up. I don't have the final statistics yet but our financial secretary tells me that donations to missions have exceeded our budgeted amount. We will pass that excess on as the intention of the donors will be honored. So a big thank you to all who have made donations for missions. Our food pantry has also experienced larger than usual donations, both in cash and in kind. Thank you for remembering the poor. I hope that that continues also. Lastly, it seems that we have exceeded our budgeted amount for donations to finance the parish. The final numbers will be close but they look like we have all done our part.

So, let me say a big thank you and well done. I hope that your other charitable donations have also been sufficient for their needs. It is good to remember that in several places in the New Testament mention of donations to churches in financial distress are mentioned (see 1 Cor:16:1-4 and other places). Christians have ministered to the poor and sick from the very beginning of Christianity.

There point of this letter is that we have all done well. May the faith compel you to continue in your good works as they grow out of the good work that God has done for you in Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ
Pastor Ken Fosse

**The mission of Prince of Peace
Lutheran Church is to know Christ
and inspire people to be caring
instruments of God
in spreading Christ's love,
with joyous enthusiasm,
by word and deed.**



BURNING OF THE POPE'S BULL (December 1520)

Written by The Rev. Rick Serina, Secretary of the LCMS NJ District

This was written in a series of articles to commemorate an anniversary of a particular writing or event in the life of Martin Luther.

On December 10, 1520, Martin Luther and a group of students burned the papal bull “Exsurge Domine.” The bull (a term referring to the seal placed upon an official letter) had threatened Luther with excommunication if he did not recant of the errors listed in it. He had sixty days upon receiving the bull to comply or be excommunicated. On that sixtieth day, he joined students and faculty from the university in Wittenberg as they gathered at the Chapel of the Holy Cross around 9:00 in the morning. Luther planned this theatrical display as a response to a burning of his books in Leipzig that never happened. First on the pile were books of canon law and later papal decrees, then the books of many other medieval theologians or critics of Luther. (Strangely enough, no one could part with the writings of Thomas Aquinas—they remained.) Luther placed Exsurge Domine on the flaming pile last. Afterwards, the students staged a funeral rite for canon law, complete with a procession, more book burnings, and even accompanying songs. Canon law, so to speak, was dead to the earliest Lutherans that day. That doesn't tell the whole story, though, of why Luther and his students rejected canon law, nor how we as Lutherans have come to replace canon law with something that serves the same function even to this day.

For modern Lutherans, canon law might as well be a lost planet. We don't know much about it. You won't hear anything about it outside of a church history class, and even then it is usually referred to in a pejorative fashion. At the time of the Reformation, though, canon law was an umbrella term for several different things. The first was the so-called “Decretum Gratiani” (also known as “The Concordance of Discordant Canons”), collated by a twelfth century monk and professor, Gratian of Bologna. In it, Gratian organized many of the disciplinary canons included in early church councils and synods that sought to regulate life amongst the clergy. By comparing and contrasting them, he synthesized the various rules in such a way that the clergy of his day would have a clearer understanding of how the church and its ministries should function. The second, and more problematic to Luther's mind, were the books of papal decretals. There were at least six of these, ranging from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. While Gratian's Decretum brought together mostly ancient canons, these papal decretals were pronouncements of sitting popes in the most recent centuries, meaning they were not only fairly new, but also published by popes at the height of their power and influence. What we find in the debate over Luther's view of indulgences from 1517 to 1521 is that his opponents primarily used these later papal decretals rather than the earlier canons to denounce Luther's positions, and they did so on the basis of papal authority rather than the canons and councils of the early church.

We have to understand Luther's criticism—and ultimate rejection—of canon law in this light. In the early days of the Reformation, Luther repeatedly defended his right to criticize indulgences due to the fact that no council had officially recognized them. His opponents, in turn, responded that various papal pronouncements collected in the later decretals of canon law, as well as other subsequent papal decrees, had promulgated indulgences and that those popes had the right to do so because of their office. In order to better understand these arguments, Luther began to study canon law more closely and this led him to assert famously that papal authority had been built not upon Scripture, ancient councils, or the first eleven centuries of church history, but rather upon the decrees of popes in the preceding four-hundred years. At the Leipzig Debate in 1519, he dismissed the notion that canon law, popes, or even councils were infallible, claiming that Scripture alone was beyond human error. As a doctor of theology responsible for teaching and preaching Holy Scripture, Luther believed the clear doctrine of the Bible could not be overturned by fallible human authority, including papal decretals of recent vintage.

Yet, there Luther stood in December 1520, with his teachings condemned by a papal bull behind the authority of canon law. Exsurge Domine, completed in June 1520 after nearly six months of negotiations, listed 41 specific errors of Luther (mostly supplied by his debate opponent at Leipzig, John Eck). It condemns Luther's teaching and those who espouse his teaching. It prohibits any and all use of Luther's writings. It gives Luther—and all those associated with him—sixty days to provide legal documentation that they recant of their errors, or simply to present themselves in Rome as a sign of repentance. Rome handed John Eck the responsibility of delivering the bull to Wittenberg, but Eck sent a courier to do so on October 3. Luther officially received it on October 10, thereby starting the sixty-day clock that expired when Luther tossed the letter on the bonfire of canon law. Because of his resistance, the bull “Decet Romanum Pontificem” officially excommunicated him in January 1521.

During this period, Luther wrote numerous responses to the bull, but none more notable than his December tract, “Why the Books of the Pope and His Disciples Were Burned,” drafted in the two weeks after the event. First, Luther lays out several reasons why the books were burned. His principal contention is that as a “sworn doctor of Holy Scripture” with a responsibility to “destroy, or at least to ward off false, corrupt, unchristian doctrine,” he could not abide by misleading teachings imposed on the faithful by the authority of popes (LW 31:383). The bull and other writings of Rome had contradicted the Scriptures, and thus, he was “duty-bound” (31:384) to point out those errors

and protect others from their seduction. Then, in much the same fashion as Exsurge Domine had listed his 41 alleged errors, Luther proceeded to note thirty errors of canon law and papal decrees “on account of which they are rightly to be burned and shunned” (31:385). Nearly all were taken directly from either Gratian’s Decretum or the later collections of decretals. In some cases, he made no comment; in others, a brief note. But in several instances, he offered an extended rationale for why that particular statement was wrong. Luther’s point, however, was not to debate the merits of canon law or to get into the weeds of canon law interpretation. On the contrary, he sought to point out an underlying problem, no better said than in his final identification of canon law’s errors: “The pope does not derive authentic existence, strength, and dignity from Scripture, but Scripture from him, which is one of the main articles” (31:392). The problem was that papal authority—and the canon law supporting it—had overtaken Scripture as the principal doctrinal authority in the church.

Luther denounced canon law, burned the papal bull, refused to recant of his teaching, and accepted excommunication because the truths of Scripture had been traded for alternate truths established strictly by the fiat of popes. It is exceptionally important to bear in mind that Luther had no interest in rejecting church authority. As a graduated doctor of theology teaching at a university chartered by the pope, he was part of that church authority. He pledged to teach, preach, and uphold the doctrine of the church. Yet where that stated doctrine contradicted Holy Scripture, he was conscience-bound to speak against it. For Luther, this is not a question of accepting or rejecting church authority; it is a question of accepting or rejecting Scriptural truth. Where church authority upholds the teachings of Holy Scripture, then the church is well within its right to exercise its authority in defense of that doctrine and to maintain order and discipline within its membership. Where Scripture does not speak, then the church may establish and even enforce certain things by human right, that is, according to its best judgment. Yet it may not and should not impose human opinion as if it were biblical truth, and it absolutely must not reject biblical truth in favor of human opinion.

But our problem as Lutherans isn’t church authority, human opinion, or even canon law. The problem comes when those things are passed off as divinely revealed truth or, worse still, when they contradict or replace Scripture. That’s when the bonfire gets started (metaphorically speaking, of course). In and of themselves, though, church authority, human opinion, and canon law are fine, useful instruments that can be of great benefit to us. Lutherans intuitively understood this in ages past. During Luther’s own lifetime, Lutherans drafted legally enforceable church orders for use in territories adopting the Reformation, and they did so in order that the churches there might have some basic guidance in how to conduct their worship, instruct their young, marry their people, and provide for those in need. Later Lutherans developed “church laws” (Kirchenrechten) to regulate all ecclesiastical and civil matters in Protestant lands. When nineteenth-century Lutherans in America began to form synods, like our own, they did so by drafting constitutions, which stipulated what their people believed and how they were to be organized. When they finally incorporated under state law, they expanded those constitutions to include bylaws governing how they were to operate denominationally. No one accused them of imposing a new canon law or enforcing human opinion or using coercive authority. On the contrary, everyone recognized that this was the necessary, left-handed exercise of reason in support of the church by helping it to function practically, neatly, efficiently, and—yes—legally.

When it comes to participating in our denomination today, however, many seem unwilling to grant that. We deprecatingly refer to Synod as merely advisory and to our synodical constitution and bylaws as canon law—and that’s true, in a sense. But it also isn’t a bad thing. Since the foundation of our denomination, Synod has only ever claimed for itself the power of the Word of God and the power of persuasion. The first of these is the true authority in the church; the second is how we deal with one another when there is no direct word of Scripture. This persuasion happens through theological publications, collegial conversation, circuit forums, district convocations, and synodical conventions before making its way into constitutions and bylaws—our version of canon law. The end-result is a fundamentally good thing. It helps us do what we are called to do as the church “decently and in good order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). In no way, shape, or form does that mean doing things this way is necessary, let alone necessary for salvation. The way we have chosen to operate and carry out our business should never be a burden on consciences, nor may it ever replace, contradict, or reject Holy Scripture. When it does, then it becomes “antichrist” in the broad sense of the term and must be rejected.

Constitutions and bylaws, canon law, and church authority do not make the church what it is; faith wrought by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament does. Nevertheless, they serve a useful function: they enable us to organize ourselves in a way that is consistent with what Scripture says yet takes advantage of the best resources our left-handed human reason can offer. When they replace, contradict, or reject Scripture, then we must replace, contradict, or reject them. We can even burn them, as Luther did, if we wish. Where they are consistent with and supportive of Scripture, though, where they help us organize ourselves “decently and good order,” where they facilitate harmony and peace, where they enable us to engage in civil yet meaningful dialogue, they should be embraced as created gifts to be used in service to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

I read the following article about funeral services and want to share it with you. The writer is an Anglican and so refers to the Book of Common Prayer. We have the same prayers in our Agenda.

If you desire a copy of our funeral service let me know and I will give you one.

Pastor Ken Fosse

I Don't Want a Celebration of Life, I Want a Burial Service

By Greg Goebel, August 30th, 2018 From: anglicancompass.com

When I die, please don't call my burial service a Celebration of Life. Don't get me wrong, I hope that people will want to celebrate my life. I just don't want this to replace my Christian burial.

I want to be buried according to the rites of a Christian. I want to be one more brother in Christ, saved by grace, who died in him and will rise with him. I want to be buried like those who have gone before me.

Grief and Joy

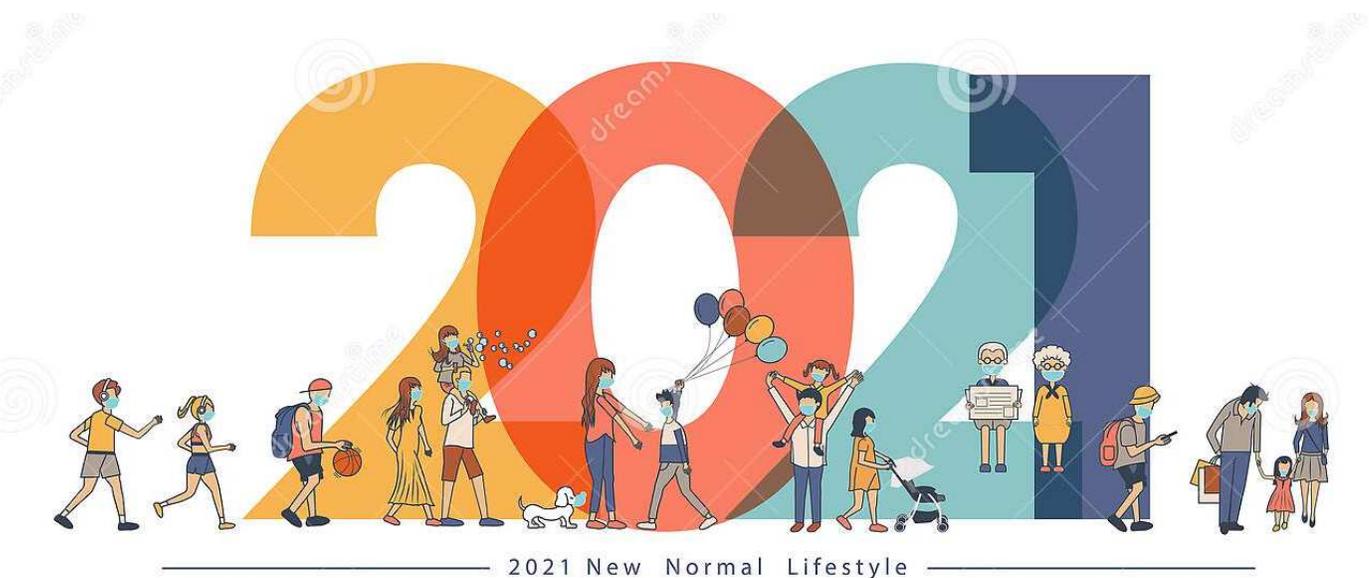
Death is a terrible thing. The burial rite acknowledges the grief and pain of death. It doesn't hide away from sorrow and loss or need to pretend that death doesn't happen. Yet it includes both sorrow and joy. "Happy are those who die in the Lord" and "O worthy and eternal Judge, do not let the pains of death turn us away from you at our last hour." It's all there in a beautiful both/and.

Sometimes Celebrations of Life try to avoid the grieving process altogether. Instead, I hope my family and friends have a real chance to gather and to grieve together. To face and rue death together.

The Book of Common Prayer has a beautiful prayer summing this up:

O God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our brother (or sister) N. We thank you for giving him to us, his family and friends, to know and to love as a companion on our earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our course on earth, until, by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We don't need to pretend that death is not painful, but we can only face this in the light of God's grace and the Resurrection of Christ. *(continued on next page)*



I'm a Sinner

Sometimes the contemporary celebrations of life avoid stating that the person was a sinner. The Christian burial rites don't need to pretend that I was, on balance, good enough to get into heaven.

I've let a lot of people down in my life, including God my creator, and I'm sure I will do it again. I hope those who knew me will be given the chance to forgive me, rather than pretending there is nothing to forgive. God has forgiven me, and so please celebrate that. I don't need you to pretend I'm not a sinner.

These rites actually pray for me, a sinner. Facing my body, the Celebrant says,
Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant N. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen.

I don't want to spend my whole life believing, saying, and preaching that I'm a sinner saved by grace, only to have people gather to proclaim that I was a special person who did more good than bad.

I've tried to live in a good way as best I can, but I don't want to be portrayed as better than anyone else. If I've done any good for anyone, I'm thankful for that because it was a gift from God. But my salvation and peace don't come from that. I'm just one lamb in my Savior's flock. I like that. He loves me, and I love him.

If my life is eulogized, let it be in the context of God's marvelous grace and the love that he puts in our hearts. Let it be the story of how God wove our stories together. Let it be a story of forgiveness, and let it leave room for even more forgiveness.

Worship Is The Center

The Christian burial rite is worship. We are gathering for a worship service that is about God and in that context we are mourning the death of a believer.

We gather and pray. We read the Scripture lessons. We hear a sermon. We recite the creed. We receive Holy Communion together. We are dismissed into the world.

The funeral service is not separate from Sunday. It is a day of Christ.

I've been worshipping Christ with his Church my whole life. I don't want my last service to be any different.

Remembering and Honoring Our Loved Ones

I have attended gatherings of family and friends to remember and celebrate the life of a loved one who has died. I have attended ceremonies to honor the achievements of a person who has passed on. I've buried my mother and other family and friends. I honor them. I'm thankful for them, and I am thankful for the ways I've been able to celebrate their lives. There are so many important and necessary ways to celebrate and grieve.

So, if you find it in your hearts to celebrate my life, thank you. I know I won't deserve it, but I do appreciate the thought.

But please do it over a bottle of beer (or diet Coke) in the fellowship hall after the burial, not in place of it.

When that time comes, please bury me according to the Book of Common Prayer.

And if I'm allowed to say it about myself, may I rest in peace and rise in glory.

And so may you.

Advent Credo

Submitted by Rev. Kenneth Fosse

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—

This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—

This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—

This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—

This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peace-makers—

This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world.

From *Testimony: The Word Made Flesh*, by Daniel Berrigan, S.J. Orbis Books, 2004.

Christmas Card Collection

Wrap Up

Judy Ricca wishes to thank those of you who contributed to this year's holiday greeting card project, especially to those who signed all the cards they donated. Over 600 cards to 7 facilities were delivered on Monday, Dec. 21st. The folks receiving them truly appreciated our church's efforts.

Please remember, right after the New Year, we will continue preparing "Thinking of You" cards and collecting magazines for Howell's "Meals o' Wheels" program recipients.

Please call Judy at 732-364-6615 if you have any questions.



Stewardship Newsletter Article for January 2021

(Reprinted from the LCMS website)

It's a new year. It's a time when we take stock of the year past in order to improve the year to come. It's a time when we sit down to plan and implement what we want to accomplish and even change. Part of that is planning our stewardship for the coming year.

Often, we find this difficult and daunting and even joyless, but it doesn't have to be. In fact, it is really quite simple and full of joy. So, here are some tips to make that planning less stressful. You begin by answering these three questions:

- Who are you?
- To whom do I give?
- And how much?

So, who are you? The Table of Duties in the *Luther's Small Catechism* informs us. Are you a hearer of God's Word? Are you a citizen of society? Are you a member of a family? Stewardship covers these three estates: church, society, and family. We don't particularly struggle to give to society or family. Our struggles, our difficulties, and our questions arise in giving to the Church.

So, what is our duty as members of the Church with regard to giving? Again, the Table of Duties, gives us a guide. If you are a hearer – a member of the Church who receives instruction – St. Paul taught: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). This means the local congregation is primary.

Your pastor is the one called to preach the Gospel to you and administer the Lord's blessed sacraments to you. Your congregation is the place where those things happen. Thus, when God calls us to give to the Church, He has the local congregation in mind. For "the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:14).

How much do we give to the local congregation? Our only instructions are to give:

- Regularly (1 Cor. 6:1–2);
- Proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:12);
- Generously (2 Cor. 8:20);
- Of our first fruits (Gen. 4:4; Prov. 3:9; Lev. 27:30); and
- With a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

In other words, giving to the Church is not to be an afterthought, given after everything else is spent. In this way, it is deliberate. We give regularly – weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly – keeping in mind our own strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. We set it aside beforehand – before anything else is spent.

From those first fruits, we set aside a proportionate and generous amount. Ten percent was the standard for the Israelites. This was a command for the ancient Israelites. We can give as much as we want, but ask yourself: Do we really want to be less generous than was commanded of the Israelites? Is the job of the New Testament Church bigger or smaller than the job given to Israel?

And how are we to give it? We give it with eagerness and earnestness. We give it cheerfully and with love, not out of compulsion. For through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God has made us His children, forgiven us all our sins, given us grace upon grace, promised us life everlasting with Him in His kingdom, and filled us with His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit. This makes giving a joy, as Jesus said, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

It's that easy. And it is joyful. For in stewardship, our gracious and giving Lord invites us to take part in the work that He accomplishes here on earth, providing for the ongoing preaching of the Gospel as well as those who are in need. Taking part in that makes all our work holy – work that is done in service to the Lord as priestly members of His kingdom.

PROPERS PREVIEWS

A look at the readings to help you prepare for worship

January 3, 2021

The Second Sunday after Christmas

1 Kings 3:4-15 Solomon asks for wisdom to rule his people.

Ephesians 1:3-14 He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

Luke 2:40-52 Jesus remains behind at the temple.

January 10, 2021

The Baptism of Our Lord

Genesis 1:1-5 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Romans 6:1-11 Through baptism, we are buried with Christ in His death in order to be raised from the dead.

Mark 1:4-11 Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan.

January 17, 2021

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10 The Lord calls Samuel four times.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20 You are not your own, you were bought with a price.

John 1:43-51 Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael.

January 24, 2021

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10 The people of Nineveh repent.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 The appointed time has grown short, says Paul.

Mark 1:14-20 Jesus' call to repentance and call to discipleship.

January 31, 2021

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 God will raise up a prophet.

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 For us there is one God.

Mark 1:21-28 Jesus heals the man possessed by and evil spirit.

THOSE WHO SERVE

Brandon Chornobroff will be the Elder at the 8:00 a.m. services (unless otherwise noted)

Lynne Berghoff will be the Lector on the first Sunday of each month.

Denise Abdul-Malak, Head Elder, 732-406-1531, schedules Assisting Ministers

ALTAR GUILD

Lisa Tess, Elba Hillis and Anne McDonnell

Lisa Tess, 732-905-0687, is Directress of the Altar Guild. Members serve for one month on a rotating basis.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Please place \$25 per bouquet in a Flower Fund Envelope (which can be found in the Flower Book) and place it in the offering plate. There is a maximum of three bouquets on the altar each week.

USHERS and ACOLYTES are advised to remain home until further notice.

Important January Dates to Remember:

- January 1
New Years Day
- January 6
The Epiphany
- January 17
Sanctity of Life Sunday
- January 18
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- January 20
Presidential Inauguration
- January 24
Congregation Meeting

Great
are the
works
of the
Lord.

JANUARY DEADLINE

If you have an article that you would like placed in the February 2021 newsletter, please email it or drop it off in the church office.

The church email address is
popchurch@optonline.net.

The deadline is Friday, January 22, 2021