



First of the Month @ CLC

February 1, 2022

Dear Christ Lutheran Church,

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Many people, especially those in a 12-Step program, know these words as *The Serenity Prayer*. But it is more than serenity that is being prayed for. It is serenity, courage, and wisdom. And I tell you, this prayer has been on my lips for many months now.

We are coming up to the two-year mark of life with COVID-19. The world has experienced so much change, and with change has come conflict, and with conflict has come division. And often it feels anything but serene. But I pray this prayer because I have had to accept that I cannot change the presence and danger of COVID, I cannot change the fears people have about COVID, and I cannot change the political issues that swirl around because of COVID. And I need to find serenity to live with the tension of how things are and how I think they should be. And it isn't easy.

But I also pray for courage to change the things I can. As a pastor, I know I have the ability to change worship styles, ministry programs, and staffing priorities. Change for the sake of change is never ideal. So, the changes I seek for the church are, to the best of my abilities, attempts to be true to our mission and values. And sometimes that calls for courage because not everyone likes change. But the one thing I have the greatest control over changing is me. Changing to face certain limitations or blind spots with the desire to be healthier and more Christ-like is always an important and arduous process (at least for me).

And I also pray for wisdom. Wisdom in this case means letting God be God in my life. It means giving over to God the things and people that I cannot change. And it means courageously dealing with my stuff that I can change. And it all depends on God. This church, this ministry, the people who make up this ministry, it all belongs to God. And so also do these times, as challenging as they are. So, as it says in Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Which, for me, suggests a healthy dose of humility is required to navigate through these times, and a yearning to learn the ways of God.

This has been a very interesting year for us. We started the first quarter of the year gathering remotely, and then we "opened up" for on campus worship in April (in time for Easter), but that meant we needed to go through different iterations of on-campus restrictions, and then we lost our music minister and intern and administrator, but we finished the year hiring a new music minister and a new church administrator. Whew!

For those who like statistics, at year-end, the membership of Christ Lutheran Church is 694 baptized members, 492 confirmed members, and 271 households. This number includes both English and Lahu-speaking members. Compared to the end of 2019 (pre-COVID), we are down 91 members (-11%), 71 confirmed members (-13%), and 37 households (-12%). We have been worshipping in a hybrid fashion (on campus and on-line) since April. The average number of worshippers per Sunday since April 1 is...

- On-line – 97.05 (English) + 82.84 (Lahu) = 179.89
- On Campus – 166.3 (English) + 46.1 (Lahu) = 212.4

I know we are comparing "apples to oranges," but our average Sunday attendance at the end of 2019 was 375 (English was 317, and Lahu was 58). It is very hard to know, for example, how many are watching on-line from a single home. And, of course, we largely do not know who our on-line viewers are.

In 2021 we celebrated 8 baptisms (one adult), 2 marriages, and 10 funerals (7 of which were members). By comparison, there were no baptisms in 2020, 2 weddings, and 10 funerals (6 of which were members).

Giving was good in 2021, but could have been stronger. As such our giving to the ministry of the church by English-speaking members came in at \$898,402, roughly \$36,500 below expected. Our non-member giving was \$46,999, roughly \$7,750 above expected. And the Lahu giving was \$43,915, roughly \$4,700 above expected. The bottom line, however, is because we were not fully staffed and because costs were kept down, we ended the year meeting all expenses.

2022 already proves to be an eventful year. We are seeing new faces attend worship, many of which are coming from St. James Lutheran Church in Hanford. Due to dwindling membership, St. James has voted to close; their last Sunday is February 27. There is a sadness to this closure; for about the same number of years CLC has been a church, St. James has had a presence in Hanford. Some have already joined CLC, but there may be many others who will consider our congregation as they search for a new church. Please pray for the pastor of St. James, Reverend Julie Kelly, and the many members, as they end one chapter and begin another.

As stated, we are ecstatic to welcome our new director of music ministries, Paul Delgado, and our new director of administration, Kurt Salierno. They have already had an impact on our church. There will be one additional staff change coming, the retirement of Patti Dudley as Spiritual Gifts Coordinator. For over 23 years Patti has served this church faithfully. She has touched so many lives, mine especially. We will be celebrating her tenure and retirement on Sunday, February 13, following the 9:30 service. I hope you will join me in thanking her for all she has done (note: Patti is not moving away, which means she will continue to find other avenues to serve at CLC; it's in her blood!).

Thinking of Patti causes me to go back to *The Serenity Prayer*. It was written by the eminent theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr. As you read these concluding words of the prayer, maybe you will see the life of Patti reflected in them. That would be appropriate. But hopefully, even more, you will sense the desire to have these words reflect your life. I know I do, especially when I pray for serenity, courage, and wisdom.

*Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.*

Peace,
Pastor Brian Malison



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