

INTERMISSION

Hope is something *very different* from waiting. Hope is *trusting* that something will be fulfilled, but fulfilled according to the promises of, in this case, **God**, and not just according to our own wishes.

Therefore, hope, by its very nature, is *always open-ended*. I have found it very important in my own life to let go of wishes in order to start *hoping*. It is only when I am willing to **let go of wishes** that something really *new*, something *beyond* my own expectations, can begin to happen in my life.

Henri Nouwen
Seeds of Hope



The Annunciation (detail), Fra Angelico (1395-1455), Prado Museum



CHRISTMAS SEASON EVENTS

Midweek Services:

December 2, 9, and 16

12:00 Service **online only**

Christmas Eve Services:

5:00 and 7:30 p.m.

Annual Meeting:

December 13, 9:30 a.m.

& January 17, 9:30 a.m.

POINSETTIA ORDERS

It's time to order poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. Sign up sheets will be in the Narthex through December 13, though if you prefer you may call Betsy in the church office to place your order. The cost is \$8.50 per plant.



ANNUAL MEETING

This year's Annual Congregational Meeting will begin on Sunday, December 13, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. The meeting will be held in the Sanctuary and will be simultaneously broadcast by Zoom for those members who would like to attend from home. Those who wish to attend in person will be asked to abide by state and county health protocols to slow the spread of COVID19, including social distancing and wearing masks.

As was the case in 2019, the Annual Meeting will be held in two parts. At the first part on December 13, we will vote on new Council officers, be presented with the annual report on the Opportunity Endowment Fund (OEF), review the YTD church financials, and be presented with several budget options to consider for 2021. The meeting will adjourn for members to consider these options, and then will reconvene on January 17, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. (also in the Sanctuary and online via Zoom) to vote on the final budget.

This year we will have a much higher level of uncertainty to consider in selecting our budget than in most years. We live in a very unsettled time. The country has been experiencing rising COVID19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths since October. However, we have also recently seen important medical advances, and it is possible that by the time we meet the first COVID19 vaccinations will have already been administered to front line health care workers in our city. In short, the situation is very dynamic, and we simply do not know when we will be able to return to our normal worship and outreach programs in 2021. It is for this reason that Council will present options for the Congregation to consider that allow flexibility to respond to evolving circumstances while ensuring that we meet our obligations and remain on solid financial ground under conservative scenarios.

The budget options will range between a low case of ~\$540,000 and a high case of ~\$580,000, with two intermediate cases. The options will include a small contingent reserve for the Council to use to restart certain worship and outreach programs when it is feasible to do so. All options include our commitments to the Homeless Ministry and Opportunity Endowment Fund (which are paid outside the General Fund) and also our commitments to West Houston Assistance Ministries and the ELCA, both of which are proposed to be unchanged from 2020. These options compare with a 2020 approved budget of \$617,109, and a forecast year-end 2020 expenditure of ~\$583,000. The budget savings achieved this year have been despite a very large number of repairs to the building and key equipment, particularly following the lightning strike in July. We are able to bring down costs for next year's budget options below the 2020 year-end forecast due to the mortgage refinancing that saves ~\$24,000 per year and also the expectation that we will return to normal annual repair and maintenance costs.

As shown in the Financial Dashboard, we are currently running an operating deficit through October of \$64,405.

We normally run an operating deficit in the summer when we experience high utility bills and families are on vacation. The operating deficit normally closes in the fall. This year the operating deficit has grown in the fall due to the aforementioned repairs and also to declining contributions. The operating deficit has been financed by drawing on our cash reserve, which is currently at 5.1 months of average monthly expenses. We do not yet have a forecast for 2020 year-end revenues, but it is likely to be in the range of the 2021 budget cases (\$540,000 to \$580,000), possibly on the low end of the range.

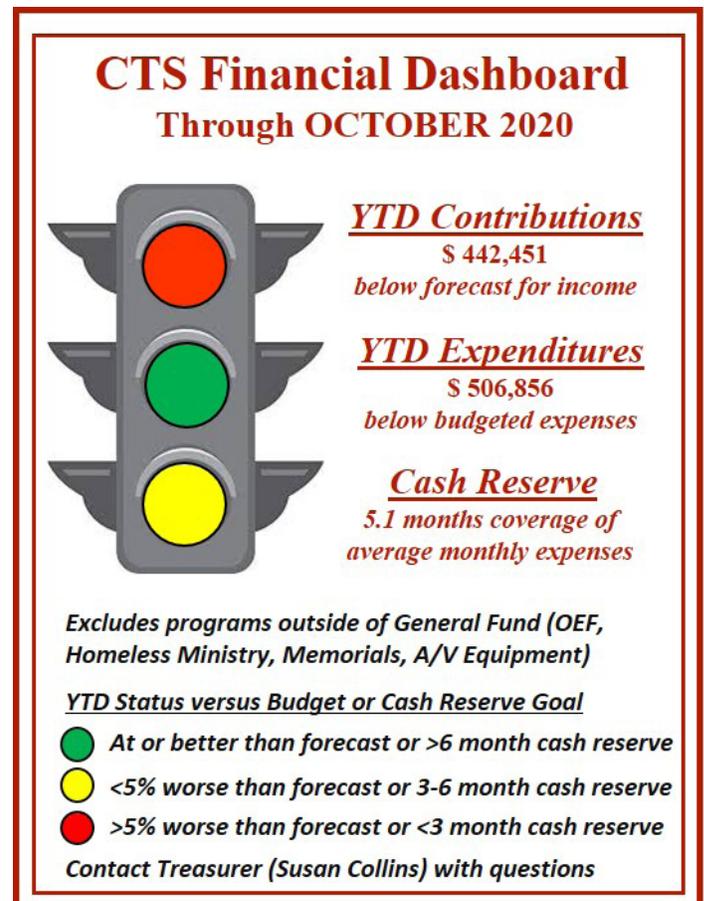
These are some of the factors that the Congregation will have to consider when it approves a final budget in January. By then we will have final 2020 financial results, and also should have a better idea of what to expect in 2021 with respect to the pandemic and the societal impact.

Until then I thank you for your continued commitment and devotion to our Church's mission and look forward to seeing you on December 13.

Zoom link for both meetings, no password required:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7789019371>

Link will also be posted on the CTS website.

Faithfully yours,
 Chandler T. Wilhelm, Council President



COUNCIL NOTES

The Christ the Servant council met in the sanctuary on Thursday, November 12th, for its monthly meeting.

As is usual protocol this time of year, the council spent a significant amount of time discussing the various budget options for CTS in 2021. Further details regarding these options will be mailed out and will be available on the CTS website for any member of the congregation who wishes to review them in advance of the meeting scheduled for Sunday, December 13th. Also discussed were the names of candidates nominated to the CTS council for terms beginning in 2021. These candidates will be put forward to the CTS congregation for voting at the congregational meeting.

One of the air-conditioning/heating units in the sanctuary needs to be replaced, or at a minimum, repaired. The council discussed the two options for remedying the unit breakdown and voted unanimously to approve funds to replace the unit.

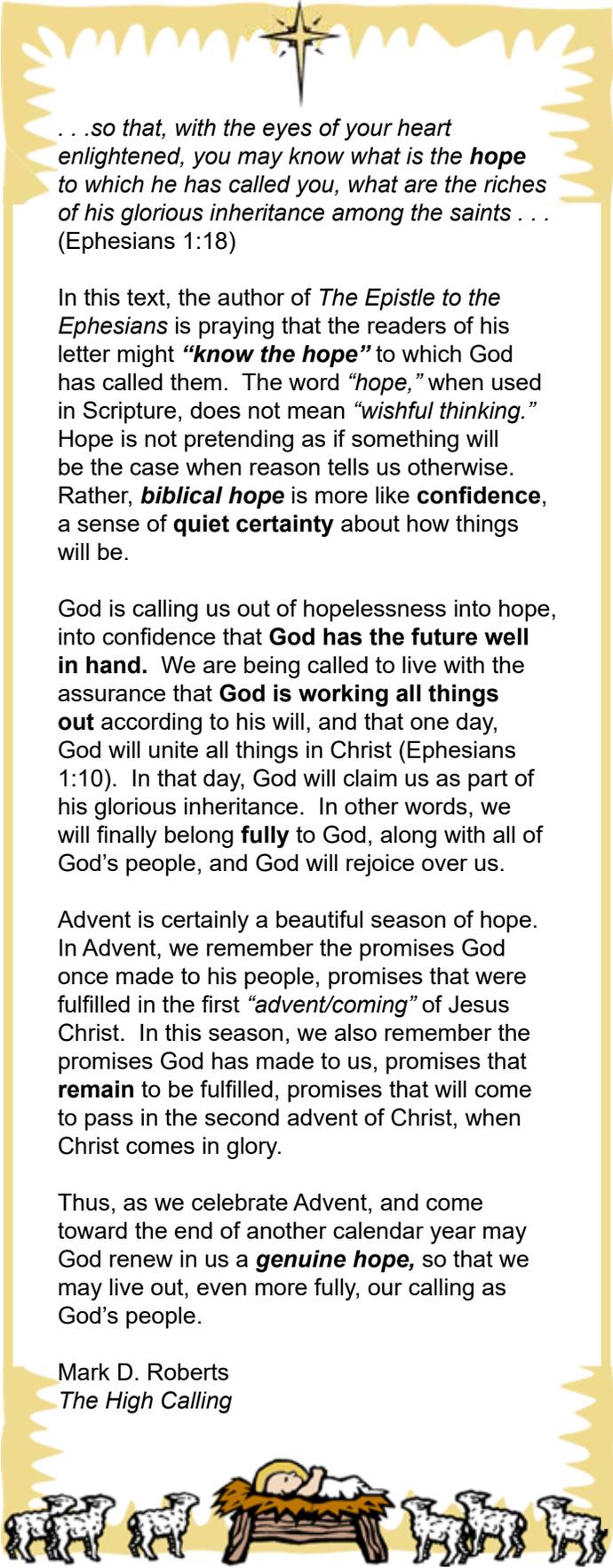
In light of ongoing concerns regarding Covid-19, the council discussed protocol for managing mid-week Advent services, Advent Sunday services and Christmas Eve services. While it is anticipated that in-person services will be held in all cases, doing so assumes state and local health guidelines do not change such that in-person worship is not permitted. CTS will have overflow capacity in the fellowship hall in order to adhere to guidelines in the event that attendance exceeds the sanctuary capacity. Please note that all services will be provided via on-line streaming for congregation members, and others, who prefer to worship from home.

In-person participation at Sunday services has remained steady at about 55 attendees total (includes attendance at both services). On-line attendance remains healthy at about 175 attendees total. The CTS YouTube channel now has over 80 subscribers.

Under ordinary business, the council reviewed and unanimously approved the October 2020 council meeting minutes and the November 2020 Treasurer's report. Additionally, the council reviewed reports from the Financial Secretary, Director of Music, Director of Youth and Family, and Pastor Jim.

Prayerfully submitted,
Karen Carter, Council Secretary

In this year, when our gatherings are limited and our celebrations muted, Mark Roberts writes words of hope...



...so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints . . . (Ephesians 1:18)

In this text, the author of *The Epistle to the Ephesians* is praying that the readers of his letter might "**know the hope**" to which God has called them. The word "*hope*," when used in Scripture, does not mean "*wishful thinking*." Hope is not pretending as if something will be the case when reason tells us otherwise. Rather, **biblical hope** is more like **confidence**, a sense of **quiet certainty** about how things will be.

God is calling us out of hopelessness into hope, into confidence that **God has the future well in hand**. We are being called to live with the assurance that **God is working all things out** according to his will, and that one day, God will unite all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). In that day, God will claim us as part of his glorious inheritance. In other words, we will finally belong **fully** to God, along with all of God's people, and God will rejoice over us.

Advent is certainly a beautiful season of hope. In Advent, we remember the promises God once made to his people, promises that were fulfilled in the first "*advent/coming*" of Jesus Christ. In this season, we also remember the promises God has made to us, promises that **remain** to be fulfilled, promises that will come to pass in the second advent of Christ, when Christ comes in glory.

Thus, as we celebrate Advent, and come toward the end of another calendar year may God renew in us a **genuine hope**, so that we may live out, even more fully, our calling as God's people.

Mark D. Roberts
The High Calling



YOUTH AND FAMILY NEWS

SEAFARER BOXES

If you and your family are interested in assembling a shoebox (or shoeboxes) for donation to the Seafarers Center, you may do so at home using any or all of the NEW, UNUSED items in good condition from the list below. Simply fill a box as full as possible of these items as you can, seal it up, gift wrap it, and drop it off at the church before December 20th, 2020. To make things easier, I'll supply the shoeboxes and some of the supplies from the items that were donated earlier this year. While supplies last, I'll put those items out on Sunday Mornings between now and December 13th and you can take some to put in your family's box(es). Most ships are requesting that, whenever possible, we try to include full-size rather than travel-size items because they are having to go longer between opportunities to get off the boat and get supplies because of COVID-19.

Supply List

2021 Calendar	Shaving Cream
Address Book	Soap
Band Aids (fabric)	Shampoo
Baseball Caps	Toothbrush
Comb	Toothpaste
Deodorant	Gum & Hard Candy
Dental Floss	Key Chains
Disposable Razors	Pocket Size Notebooks
Flashlight w/Batteries	Mechanical Pencils
Kleenex	Pens
Lip Balm	Playing Cards
Lotion	Popcorn
Nail Clippers	Socks
Gold Bond Cream	Sudoku
Gold Bond Powder	Texas Souvenirs
Hot Chocolate	T-Shirts
Needle & Thread	USB Flash Drives
Q-Tips	Word Searches

CONFIRMATION MENTORS WANTED

Our new Confirmation year has started. We'll spend the next 11 months talking about Lutheran History, the Reformation, The Lord's Prayer, The Apostle's Creed, The Ten Commandments, Sacraments and some history and practice of Christ The Servant, as well! At our last meeting we welcomed one new student, and one student via Zoom for a total of 4. Our next meeting will be Sunday, December 13th at 12:30 p.m in the conference room. At that meeting we will re-initiate our practice of having mentors for each of our confirmands. If you are interested in being a confirmation mentor to one of our students, we are in need of 3 men who are willing to give about

15 minutes of time at the beginning of each meeting, and stand with their student at their confirmation. If this sounds like something God might be calling you to do, please let J.T. know, or email jt@christtheservant.net

LIVESTREAM SURVEY

There's a new survey available, and we hope that everyone who participates in our live streaming services (not those who strictly attend in-person) will take a few moments to fill it out. It is very similar to our first survey from a few months ago, with some of the same questions. We have added some additional questions that will help us to further discern what we are doing well, and what we can do to make sure we are having the impact we desire on our community. Thanks for helping us by filling it out as honestly as possible. You should have received an email about filling out the survey, but you can also find it on our website at christtheservant.net/survey. Please fill it out only once per household.



Holy Family with an Angel, Guido Reni, late 1590's, Getty Museum

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Adult Sunday School is going strong and would love for you to join us! We are currently taking a fairly rapid tour through the New Testament epistles so that we can develop an appreciation of their messages as well as compare their content and style. December studies will be 2 Thessalonians and Colossians. After the new year we plan a series on Frederick Buechner and then we will study Robert Farrar Capon's books on Christ's Parables. All classes may be attended in person in the CTS conference room or via Zoom at 9:30 on Sundays. For more information, please email either D.J. Blockhus at blockhus@earthlink.net or Richard Carlson at RichardC@davisipenn.com.

HOMELESS MINISTRY

Remember we had that lovely spaghetti dinner to raise money for homeless ministry? Thank you for the donations. The funds are being used even during COVID-19 restrictions. Our distributions have been reduced, including for toiletries. Normally, by this time of year, we would have distributed around 3000 toiletries kits. This year, we had to suspend deliveries beginning in April and now have reduced deliveries since August, so we have distributed about 1100 kits so far. Packages are prepared wearing mask and gloves for everyone's safety. We are thankful that we have been able to do that much and look forward to sharing more. Special thanks to those who are making the distributions under these challenging circumstances.

The number one item the homeless people request is new, white tube socks. Every year we have a drive to collect enough to share with all whom we see. This year is no different. If you can drop off new, men's white tube socks (the long ones) at the church (leave them packaged), we will use gloves and masks to prepare them for distribution. Let's do what we can to bring a little normalcy by sharing a valued gift to our homeless friends.



We are looking forward to when we can resume our normal outreach (and maybe have another lovely dinner together).



CTS Homeless Ministry volunteers prepare lunches to be delivered downtown.

Bottles of water are packed with all the lunches.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

CTS contributions to Lutheran World Relief were dedicated to the Glory of God during services on November 15. The congregation prepared 93 Personal Care Kits to be distributed wherever needed in the world. We will be able to track where the kits are sent. \$1800 was raised for relief in Beirut after the recent explosion there.



Personal care kits boxed and ready to send prior to the dedication on November 15



Financial donations are going to Beirut to replace destroyed equipment in the city.



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DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Christina Dittrich
Austin Beaver
- 6 Pat Hogan-Korge
- 7 Randy Collins
- 13 Christopher Lonvick
- 17 Dana Herbanek
- 18 Ethel Kijimiyo
- 20 Bernice Ribe
- 22 Mary Hiestand
- 23 Carl Teegerstrom
- 24 Mike Karas
Demi Edwards
- 27 Rosalie Fontenot
Jennifer Beaver
- 30 Ron Herbanek
- 31 Donna Schneider



2020 FLOWER CHART

The 2020 Flower Chart is hanging in the Narthex. Sign up for the Sundays you want. Single bouquets are \$27. To donate both arrangements, the cost is \$54.



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Karen Bauer
- Sharon Cotta, mother of Christy Iversen
- Jane Fontenot, grandma of Miley Rose
- Roger Lemburg
- John Krueger
- Cathy & Rob Roberson, daughter and son-in-law of Jodie Davis
- Valerie Schick, granddaughter of Nancie Blair
- Mary Shabunas, mother of Mary Hiestand
- Marjorie Swartz, mother of Julie Heil
- Frank Welsh, friend of Mike and Phylis Karas
- Zachary, grandson of Bitsy Muse

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 Victor Rweyemamu and Omega Kihupi
- 14 Neema Makia and Issiah Mgendi
- 17 LeRoy and Karen Bauer
- 29 Karl and Susan Kramer

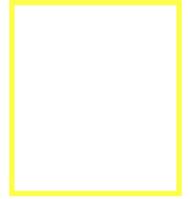


Adoration of the Child, Gerard van Hornthorst, c.1619-1621, Uffizi

INTERMISSION
DECEMBER 2020

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2020 COUNCIL

President: Chandler Wilhelm

President Elect:	Barry Rava	At Large:	Zach Edwards
Secretary:	Karen Carter	At Large:	Dale Dickman
Treasurer:	Susan Collins	At Large:	Neema Makia
Financial Secretary:	Emma Chanimbaga	At Large:	Joanne Dumler

COMMITTEE CHAIRS, GROUP LEADERS, CONTACT PEOPLE

Acolytes	Inga Carlson, Michele Byrnes	Memorial Service Coordinator	Linda Iversen
Adult Christian Ed	TBA	Men Who Love Spaghetti	Roger Cutler
Altar Guild	Lori Wood	Nursery Attendant	Sandra Ani
CanCare Representative	Susan Kramer	Opportunity Endowment Fund	DJ Blockhus
Care Team	Karen Welborn	Personnel	Ken Smith, Shirley Downing
College Ministry	Tina Blockhus	Prayer Chain	Marti Hatcher
Disaster Response Team	Ron Herbanek	Property	Brent Brown, Ron Herbanek
Family Aid Ministry	Carolyn Giannantonio	Sound Team	TBA 8:00 Service
Fellowship Committee	Rosalie Fontenot		Brent Brown-11:00 Service
Greeters	TBACarolyn Giannantonio,	Stewardship	Chandler Wilhelm
Homeless Ministry	Rosalie Fontenot	Ushers	8:00 Russell Farmer
	Mickey Walters		11:00 Pat Welborn
Ladies Dinner Group	Russell Farmer, Kevin Petterson	WHAM Representatives	Ken Smith
Lawn Care	Chandler Wilhelm	Women's Ministry	Marsha Bower
Lectors	Chandler Wilhelm	Worship and Music	Lori Wood
Liturgical Assistants			