



## *Pastor Kris' Chronicles*

### *The Way*

In the very early church, Christians didn't call themselves Christians. Instead, they called themselves The Way. It reflected an understanding that being a disciple of Jesus meant following in his path...his way. It was a way of life rather than a new religion.

Until Emperor Constantine, it was a way of life that pretty regularly clashed with the ruling authorities of the Roman Empire. Some of those clashes were fatal. But the way of life they followed – their way of love, their willingness to sacrifice their life, and their willingness to care for the sick, even at their own peril, was attractive to many ordinary people. The people of the way lived differently, and many people wanted to be a part of it. Christianity grew.

When Constantine legalized Christianity and then made it the official religion of the Roman Empire, things changed. Christianity began to look and act more and more like the Empire itself. Corruption, greed, and a thirst for worldly treasures turned many people off.

Devoted followers of Jesus retreated from the cities of the empire to the wilderness places – to deserts and forests. This was the beginning of monasticism in Christianity.

Known as the desert fathers and mothers, or ammas and abbas, they lived austere lives in the wilderness and spent much time in silence and solitude. They dispensed wisdom to others who sought a deeper connection to God. Much of that wisdom was passed on and is still available.

The desert fathers and mothers are having a bit of a renaissance lately. In fact in some ways monasticism in general is. A movement called New Monasticism gathers up a lot of the ancient ways and wisdom of the old monastics but seeks to live out that way in ordinary lives of homes, jobs, families and so on.

Celtic Christianity is another manifestation of a more monastic Christianity that is also having a bit of a heyday. The ancient Celts migrated to the British Isles probably from east of Rome. Britain was much less influenced by the Roman Empire and the Roman church than other parts of Europe. Ireland in particular was never occupied by Rome. The Christianity there was definitely still influenced by Rome, but it also had the chance to develop in some important different ways.

Influenced by the pagan Druids before them, Celtic Christians saw the sacred everywhere...in the natural world, in other people. They had a sense of God's presence in all their daily activities. They also held very fast to God calling creation good and creating humans in the divine image. Original blessing is the heart of things rather than the original sin that the Roman Church and its descendants held on to.

This view that God's breath or spirit is somehow present in every person, every creature, every atom and that it was all created good is the foundation for New Monasticism. I think it much more closely follows what the earliest Christians called The Way.

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The draw to the ammas and abbas and to the Celtic tradition I believe reflects an understanding that a religion that is only about doctrine, or a religion that negates this life for “the sweet by and by” isn’t one people want to follow.

Like the people who were drawn to The Way in the first couple of centuries, people want to be a part of something that cherishes life here and now. They are drawn to the idea that the whole of creation shimmers with God’s presence.

All the time, but especially in Lent, we are called to a Way of life, not just a belief system or a system of knowledge. It’s a way of prayer, a way of silence and solitude, a way of service and generosity. It’s a way of wisdom. It’s a way of separating ourselves from some of the attractions of modern life that tend to draw us away from God.

It is my hope that during this Lent season you will find yourself drawn more deeply into the Way.

In Christ’s peace,

*Pastor Kris*

### ***What’s Up for Lent in our corner of the world?***

I have always loved Lent.

The Midweek services...from singing Holden Evening Prayer to dinner church, video series to Bible studies, they truly are food for my soul.

I enjoy the simpler liturgies on Sunday morning. I often draw from Celtic Christian sources for the liturgy...something especially meaningful during our Gospel of John year.

So what’s on tap this year?

On Sunday’s, the Narrative Lectionary takes us through an extended exploration of Jesus’ last week. Beginning Lent 1 with the raising of Lazarus, we’ll work our way through Jesus’ last night with his disciples, his arrest, the disciples’ failure, Jesus’ trial and on Palm Sunday Jesus’ crucifixion.

The other three years, all of that gets crammed into Holy Week.

For Wednesday midweek services, it’s back to some basics...the Apostle’s Creed and the Lord’s prayer. There are four boys at Zion who will be beginning their confirmation studies during Lent so we’ll all learn together.

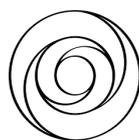
We recite these every week as part of worship, but what are we really saying? How do the creed and Lord’s prayer shape us now?

Join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. We’ll eat together, pray together, sing together, catch up with one another, and learn together.

If you are unable to join for the meal, plan to show up about 7.

Here is the schedule:

- February 25—Zion. First article of Creed
- March 4—Bethlehem. Second article
- March 11—Grace. Third article
- March 18—Zion. Lord’s prayer 1
- March 25—Bethlehem. Lord’s prayer 2



## Seeking the Spirit—by Virg Unverferth

I normally keep my Christmas village up on my mantel until March because it's a lot to set up and we are normally having winter weather. This year, it didn't feel right having it up as we experienced 60-70 degree weather, so I took it down in early February. But then, what should I put up as it's not yet spring, or even Lent!!! Due to lack of other decorations, I put up my Good Friday cross, my Easter cross, my bunnies and Easter eggs. Mentally, we are all dealing with the weather and season fluctuations on almost a daily basis and now it seems like, visually, I want to just skip over Lent and get to Easter. But, Lent is a special time as we walk through the last days of Jesus' life on earth, his sacrifice on the cross, and his resurrection. At times like this, Mindfulness Practice can be helpful.

**AWAIT:** (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, not as you expect, hope, or imagine, but just as it is in this moment.

**ALLOW:** (reach up, hands open): Allow a sense of God's presence (or not) to come and be what it is, without meeting your expectations.

**ACCEPT:** (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you are not in charge. Accept the infinity of God's presence, present whether or not you are aware.

**ATTEND** (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, actions that God invites you to from this stance or openness.

We can't control the seasons, but we can be present in each day. In prayerful silence and solitude, we can be present for God's actions in our lives, not in what we think we need. Be welcoming to what comes your way, be grateful, be present with God. Jesus gave up his life for us. . . let's give our time in Lent to Jesus.

## Holy Week Schedule

**Palm Sunday**—this is a 5th Sunday and we'll have a unity worship at Grace at 10:30.

**Maundy Thursday**—7 pm at Grace—Holy Communion

**Good Friday**—7 pm at Bethlehem—Tenebrae Service

### Easter

- Bethlehem 8:00 am with breakfast to follow
- Grace—9:00 am
- Zion—breakfast at 9:00 am with worship at 10:15 am
- Czech Presbyterian—10:30 am

Rev. Ron Youngerman will preach and lead worship at Bethlehem and Zion on Easter.

## Preaching Schedule:

March 1

Bethlehem/Zion—Pastor Kris  
Grace/Czech Pres—Don Proett

March 8

Bethlehem/Zion—Curtis Olson  
Grace/Czech Pres—Pastor Kris

March 15

Bethlehem/Zion—Pastor Kris  
Grace/Czech Pres—Megan Patent-Nygren

March 22

Bethlehem/Zion—Daryl Bohac  
Grace/Czech Pres—Pastor Kris

March 29—Palm Sunday Unity Worship

April 5—Easter

Bethlehem/Zion—Rev. Ron Youngerman  
Grace/Czech Pres—Pastor Kris

April 12—Pastor Kris on vacation

Bethlehem/Zion—Miranda Kliment  
Grace/Czech Pres—Kevin Whitcomb

April 19

Bethlehem/Zion—Pastor Kris  
Grace only—Kevin Whitcomb

April 26

Bethlehem/Zion—Mike Unverferth  
Grace—Pastor Kris

**Pastor Kris will be on vacation April 6 through April 13.** Coverage details will be available as we get closer, but Virg Unverferth will be the point of contact for emergencies at any of the four congregations.

Her number is 402-326-0122

## Important information

Pastor Kris: phone 402-499-4993; krisbo90@gmail.com

Online worship info:

Bethlehem Facebook livestream <https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemdavey>

Zion Facebook livestream <https://www.facebook.com/ZionIthaca>

Grace Facebook livestream <https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranwahoo>

**Website:** <https://www.vine4.org/> This is now the combined website for all four congregations. All the old URLs now direct to this.