

THE FOOTPATH

The monthly newsletter of

Followers of Christ Lutheran Church

A Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Dear Followers of Christ,

At the end of the month, I will be participating in a cross-country ski race. It will be my second time taking part in this particular race in northern Wisconsin, between Cable and Hayward. The big race on Saturday, February 23rd, is called the Birkebeiner, or “Birkie,” for short. It’s 55km. Can you believe that my friend wasn’t able to talk me into doing that one, although he tries to every year? Keep in mind; he’s the one who enjoys multiple feet of snow for skiing in the mountains of Maine and New Hampshire, where he lives; whereas we have a few inches if we’re lucky, or none at all.

I’ve decided again this year to do the shorter race which, I’m afraid, is not quite short enough at 29km. The name of that race is the Kortelopet, or “Korte,” for short. It will be on Friday, February 22nd, the day before the “Birkie.”

The way the winter has been shaping up, I was worried I wouldn’t get to ski at all beforehand. It was turning out to be a good winter for traveling, but bad for skiing. The roads have been mostly clear, and so have the ski trails. This most recent snowfall, however, changed that. It wasn’t much snow. It would have been better, for cross-country skiing, to have more. But it was enough to motivate me to dust off the skis, lace up the boots, and venture out on my skis for the first time this winter.

As I skied around the perimeter of my neighborhood park, the wind was blowing and the snow was drifting. There were patches along my ski trail where the grass showed through, and other places where the snowdrifts were at least a foot deep. The wind also kept blowing the snow back into the tracks I had made. I had to keep making new tracks. Between skiing into the wind and making my own tracks in the constantly drifting snow, I became sore and exhausted.

Needless to say, the conditions were not ideal – far from it. But there were two things that kept me going. One, I knew this was good conditioning for what would be a very long and challenging race at the end of the month. And two, there were moments – even on that uncomfortably windy day – that I loved the feeling of skiing. I felt myself gliding along the tracks I had made (before they quickly disappeared again); and in those fleeting moments of gliding along, I felt the pleasure of skiing, even under less than ideal conditions.

During the entire month of February, we will spend time in the church season known as Epiphany. Throughout Epiphany, we catch glimpses, revelations, of who Jesus is. So far we have seen that Jesus is the King of both Jew and Gentile, as the wise men, bearing gifts, approached him, guided by a star. We have seen that Jesus is the beloved Son of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit in the waters of his baptism; the One who displays the glory of God by turning water into wine; the One who fulfills what the prophets have said in the Holy Scriptures, by bringing good news to the poor.

When the winter gets long; and when life gets exhausting, discouraging, and far from ideal; we can still catch glimpses of who Jesus is. And we realize that even in the midst of our sins, our worries, and our disappointments, the Holy Spirit still draws us into a deeper relationship with Jesus and his heavenly Father. It’s sort of like rediscovering a love of skiing when the conditions aren’t that great; but much, much more.

Yours in Christ this Epiphany season,

Pastor Brad