**PASTORS’ COLLUMN**

*“We should fear and love God that we may … help [our neighbor] to improve and protect his property and business.” – Martin Luther’s explanation to the 7th Commandment*

How many shopping days are left until Christmas?

The perpetual countdown to our celebration of the great mystery of God’s love come among us is more often than not measured in the number of day left to find gifts for our family and friends. A gesture that grows out of our recognition of God’s incredible gift that came to us in the life of Jesus.

While I most certainly encourage you to dwell also in the mystery of Advent – our great expectant waiting for the fulfillment of God’s reign – I also invite you to consider a gift this Christmas that helps us catch a glimpse at God’s kingdom in how we live with all of God’s people in this world.

Earlier this year Reformation’s Eco Ministry team took steps towards making Reformation a Fair Trade Certified Congregation. We were happy to be recognized as the first Fair Trade Congregation in Pennsylvania and we are the twelfth to receive this designation in the country. This means Reformation is committed to teaching about and using, whenever possible, fair trade items. (Our Sunday morning coffee is just one delicious example!)

Purchasing fair trade items creates a more equitable world for everyone. These programs ensure a fair working wage for the farmers who create these goods, make certain that the land is used in a sustainable way, and guarantee the quality of their products.

While there are many organizations that work for these ideals in their business, I especially encourage you to check out the work that Lutheran World Relief is doing with farmers around the world who produce coffee, tea, and chocolate. (Information about their projects and ordering can be found at lwr.org/getinvolved/fair-trade/).

Definitely a delicious way to celebrate and give thanks for the many gifts of God!

Blessings to you and your family during this joyful time!

Pastor Alina Gayeuski