

The St. John Lutheran Church
Volume 71 — Number 01
January 2025 Jottings

“We lift up Jesus Christ in our lives, our church, and our community.”



Pastor Michael's Musings

January 2025

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’” --- Matthew 2: 1 & 2

While the three wisemen, or Magi, may have been extremely intelligent when it came to reading astrological signs, or matters more occult in nature, they seemingly didn't have a clue when it came to the workings of the human mind. King Herod was a fairly brutal man. He was feared, as most “kings” were back in those days, as being one who was not afraid to rule with an iron fist when necessary. He was also a puppet, pretty much, of the Roman Empire, doing things their way while enjoying a bit of autonomy in matters pertaining to local rule. As long as the tax money continued to flow into Roman coffers and the centurions had their run of the streets of the major towns in the Holy Land, King Herod was given free reign. That's why it is astounding that the wisemen decided to head straight to him and spill the beans on their mission from afar.

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” they ask, “We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” Worship him? KING of the Jews? You mean MY subjects? We can almost hear King Herod's thoughts rattling around in his skull as he wears the precarious crown of kingship upon his head. We can be pretty sure that Herod was not thrilled.

Of course, if we have read the rest of Matthew chapter two we know what happens. Herod tries to trick the wisemen into returning to him and giving away the location of the Christ child so that he can have him... removed. When the wisemen are told in a dream (vs. 12) not to go back and make a report to Herod, Herod realizes he has been betrayed and goes on a rampage. Joseph is told in a dream to take Mary and the Baby Jesus and go hide out in Egypt (fulfilling scripture as he goes) when Herod comes rushing in to have all the babies two years old and under killed in the area where Jesus supposedly was (location leaked by the wisemen.) Brutal indeed.

January 6th is the holiday of Epiphany. It is the holiday that celebrates the arrival of the wisemen who then fall down before the Christ child and offer him the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh before Herod puts his terrible plan into action. The word Epiphany comes from the Greek word epiphaneia which mean in English “appearance” or “manifestation.” Remember, the New Testament was written mostly in the Greek language. Epiphany is a holiday that is wrapped in wonder and solemnity. The actions of the holiday fulfill scripture. We can also see that like most things that happen in the world, there is always a backstory, and that backstory can be one of turbulence, chaos, and sin.

Through it all we see God’s will done in the world despite humanity trying to squelch it and choke it off. The power of prophecy is not so easily defeated, and one of the great ironies is that as Herod and others tried to derail God’s will, they unwittingly fulfilled the ancient scriptures without even knowing it.

As we head into 2025 with all its surprises and events, may we see and direct the things that we say and do and pray that the love of God can be seen in them. We are the hands, feet, eyes, and ears of the Body of Christ. May we continue to love one another, in Christ, as we go about doing God’s will.

Light overcomes darkness

January is a DARK month. As we start the month, we are still in the Christmas Season until Epiphany, January 6th. For most of us, we wake up in the dark, and by suppertime, it's dark again. On New Year's Day, the sun doesn't rise until 7:22 am and it sets by 4:42 pm. By January 31st, the days are only a bit longer, with the sun rising at 7:08 am and setting by 5:15. Some people find that depressing, and yet, it gives us opportunity to literally experience the scripture found in our Gospel reading for January 5th:

John 1:1-5 (NRSV)

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being* ⁴ *in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

From a practical standpoint, I embrace the darkness of January...the Christmas season lasts until January 6th, so our Christmas decorations are still bright and shining. Imagine how washed-out the beautiful lights of Christmas would be if we still had LONG bright days like we do in Summer. The sparkling lights on the trees and houses would be practically invisible! So, I embrace the darkness. I hope your trees and lights are still shining too!

Of course, there's more to the light vs darkness struggle than simply how long the sun shines each day. The prophet Isaiah said it best:

Isaiah 9:2 (NRSV)

² *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.*

Of course, that GREAT LIGHT is Jesus, whose birth we just celebrated at Christmas and whose crucifixion we will mourn on Good Friday (April 18th this year) and whose glorious resurrection is celebrated on Easter (April 20th this year).

So, embrace the darkness in this winter season and perhaps use that time to find ways to make USE of the darkness as a way to grow closer to God. Celebrate and enjoy the remaining Christmas lights, perhaps use the “dark evening” time to read a devotional or some other good book...HEY, here’s an idea...how about the BIBLE? It’s the perfect month to live out the words in the last verse of the beloved Christmas Carol “*In The Bleak Midwinter*”:

*If I were a shepherd, I would bring a
lamb;*

*if I were a wiseman, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give him, give my heart.*

Since you can’t PHYSICALLY give your heart, you CAN find ways to give. How about allocating some of your tax refund to your favorite charities? Maybe consider donating blood to help save a life? Maybe invite a friend or neighbor to come to church with you and enjoy a brunch with them after church? Maybe volunteer to be more active at church?

Isaiah 60:1 (NRSV)

¹ *Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon
you.*

Matthew 5:16 (NRSV)

¹⁶ *In the same way, let your light shine be-
fore others, so that they may see your
good works and give glory to your Father
in heaven.*

Thank you

I know Thanksgiving was in November, but as we start the New Year, let’s not forget that people do good deeds every day and deserve to be thanked.

Personally, I want to thank all those who contributed to the “staff Christmas Bonus” collection, and to my choir for helping to make the season bright.

I also want to thank all our choir singers for their dedication to help make beautiful music for our worship services.

I also want to thank all those who generously “adopted” one or more of our 63 Pantry children for this year’s Tiny Tim outreach and thanks to all our dedicated volunteers who make it happen every week.

Psalm 9:1 (NRSV)

¹ *I will give thanks to the LORD with my
whole heart; I will tell of all your wonder-
ful deeds.*

Until Next Month...

In the darkness of winter, are you still looking for the light? Look no further...

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a
light to my path.”*

Psalm 119:105 (NRSV)

Soli Deo Gloria (To God alone be the Glory)

Donald L. Bauer Director of Music

Look what is happening in Sunday School.

3 years old-K
1st-3rd grade
4th grade
Middle School

Kathy Ellis/Becca Smith
Becky & Shannon Sanders
Patti Riley
Fred Rosenbohm

Starting Sunday, December 1st and throughout the winter months, our lessons will follow the Year C Lectionary to connect with Pastor's sermons.

January 5th
January 12th
January 19th
January 26th
February 2nd
February 9th
February 16th
February 23rd
March 2nd

Jesus the Word
Jesus' Baptism
Wedding at Cana
Jesus Goes to Nazareth
Jeremiah
The Disciples
The Beatitudes
Joseph Feeds His Family
The Transfiguration

In addition to following the stories covered in Lectionary "C", our 4th-8th grade students are studying the stories in the Old Testament and how they are still relevant in today's world. As always, all Sunday School age children are welcome and we would love to have new faces join us on Sunday morning. If interested, please contact me to register your child.

John Wetterauer
christian.reichert@att.net
691-0434-home
678-1736-cell

Homebound List (as of December 9, 2024)

Rick Allen	Farmington Village 701 S. Main St. Rm. Farmington, Il. 61531	Shirley Cramer	7815 W. Plank Rd. Peoria, Il. 61604
Jim & Nadine Bartell	2705 S. Hilton Ln. Bartonville, Il. 61607	Barb Dickerson	2422 S. Daycor Divide Bartonville, Il. 61607
Jay Baumgardner	Swan Special Care Center 109 Kenwood Champaign, Il. 61824	Pat Janssen	12615 Lancaster Rd. Hanna City, Il. 61536
Art Campen % Carrie Campen	4169 King St. Denver, Co. 80211	Joyce Jones	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy Apt. 24 Peoria, Il. 61607
Jeffrey Campen	Lennox Guest Home 2875 W. 33 rd Ave. Denver, Co. 80211	Debra Look	Timber Ridge 2125 Veterans Rd. Morton, Il. 61550
Millie Carlson	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy. Apt. 48 Peoria, Il. 61607	Jane Look	Heartis Village Peoria 8201 N. Il. Route 91 Peoria, Il. 61615
Sally Catterall	Villas of Holly Brook 5301 W. Dirksen Pkwy. Apt. 28 Peoria, Il. 61607	Jerry Pitzer	Independence Village 1201 N. Northmoor Rd. Rm. 242 Peoria, Il. 61614
Evelyn Cool	Lutheran Hillside Village 6901 N. Galena Rd. Acorn Way Apt. A1 Peoria, Il. 61614	Sharon Resler	The Loft 1500 W. Northmoor Rm. 415 Peoria, Il. 61614

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Confirmation: Just a reminder that Confirmation starts back up this month; Sunday, January 12 and the 26 starting at 6pm.

Offering Envelopes: The offering envelopes are now ready for pick up and are in the Reception Room.

Thank you, Patti Thornton

Adult Bible Study: The Wednesday night Bible Study is waiting until January 29 to meet again. Thank you! Jane Rosenbohm
(309) 645-9009

Sign-Up Sheet: There is now a Greeter sign-up sheet located at the back of the church. Please consider signing up to be a greeter at a service.

Help: Sewing ladies need help. Can you tie a knot, iron, and any other help you can give us, like putting squares together for a top. We meet about 8:30am on Thursday mornings. We would enjoy your company.

Church Altar Flowers: Altar Guild flowers are \$36. & make checks payable to Becks Florist & give to Jo Ann Brooks or the Altar Guild mailbox which is located in the Reception Room by the elevator. Sign up calendar for the flowers on the bulletin board in the West Entrance.

Thank You, Altar Guild

The 2024 Sunday School Christmas Program was a great success thanks to the support of the congregation, parents, grandparents, Sunday School teachers and most importantly, the children.

This year's program was titled:

**"The Christmas Story-Jesus Christ is the same
Yesterday, Today, & Forever"**

A HUGE thank you to the following Sunday School students that participated in the nativity scene: **Eliza Harken** (Mary), **Alexander Smith** (Joseph), **Amira Day** (angel), **Avery Daniels** (angel), **Matthew Smith** (sheep), **Ezekiel Moore** (camel), **Rhett Moore** (donkey), **Mason Harken** (shepherd), **Henry Moore** (shepherd), **Samuel Moore** (shepherd), **Alexander Harken** (wiseman), **Thomas Lennie** (wiseman), **Brody Lyons** (wiseman), **Noah Harken** (boy narrator), **Layla Bill** (girl narrator).

I also want to thank **Don Bauer** for sharing his God-given musical talent, **Pepper Bauer** for being our last minute narrator, and the following Sunday School teachers for their incredible dedication in making sure this year's performance was a success: **Shannon Sanders, Barb Reakenwalt, Kathy Ellis, Patti Riley, Leora Day, and Jessica Rosenbohm.**

Readers:

Jan.	05	Christina Jones
Jan.	12	Pepper Bauer
Jan.	19	Sandy Behrends
Jan.	26	Alice Lopez

Ushers:

Jan.	05	8:00	Joe Baumgardner & Lisa Suydam
		10:30	Alex Heuermann
Jan.	12	8:00	Roger Shafer
		10:30	Shirley Schmitt
Jan.	19	8:00	Dan & Deb Sammis
		10:30	Denny & Elvessa Severt
Jan.	26	8:00	Bill & Jodi Miller
		10:30	John Rosenbohm

Greeters:

Jan. 05	8:00	Janice Baumgardner
	10:30	Brenda Heuermann
Jan. 12	8:00	Jerry Seybold & Wilma Bruninga
	10:30	Mike & Cheryl Wabel
Jan. 19	8:00	open
	10:30	Elvessa & Cara Severt
Jan. 26	8:00	Levi Miller
	10:30	Jane & Jessica Rosenbohm

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Year Round Worship Schedule :

8:00 a.m. Worship With Holy Communion
9:15 a.m. Sunday School for All Ages
10:30 a.m. Worship with Holy Communion

UPCOMING EVENTS THIS MONTH

Leisure Group will meet on January 15, 2025 at 12:00 noon.

Sewing Group meets on Thursday morning at 8:30am. Come and sew or cut patterns with them.

Choir Rehearsal is on Thursday evenings at 7:00pm. Bring your voices!

Confirmation this month is Sunday January 12th and Sunday January 26th from 6-8pm.