



Our Saviour's Good News

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January 2024

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Saviour Lutheran Church welcomes all people to a safe place to grow in faith and serve the Lord Jesus Christ

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The Feast of the Epiphany

The term Epiphany is derived from the Greek term epiphaneia which implies manifestation or appearance. Along with Easter and Christmas, it is one of the major Christian celebrations. This holyday is usually celebrated on January 6, to mark the presentation of the newborn Jesus to the Magi or the three wise men - Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

The celebration of the Epiphany actually originated in the Eastern Church, which also include a celebration of the birth of Christ. By the 4th century, the Roman Church began to celebrate Epiphany on January 6.

The feast of the Epiphany is celebrated by Christians, which commemorates the Revelation of the Divine God to Mankind in the human form or in the person of Jesus. The feast of the Epiphany also celebrates all of Jesus childhood events till the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist.

The season of Christmas commences with the first Sunday of Advent and concludes with the feast of the Epiphany in traditional Christian churches.

Colors of Epiphany

The colors of Epiphany are same as the colors of Christmas white and gold, which marks hope, celebration and newness. For traditions observing The Epiphany as a single day, the colors are often changed to green or thematic sanctuary colors.

Theological Significance of the Epiphany

The Magi, who brought the gifts to the infant Jesus were the first followers

to acknowledge Christ as the King. This worship of Christ by the Magi, first indicated that Jesus came for all the people, of all races, of all nations and the work of God would be for the whole world.

The day is also a day for reflection on Christian brotherhood and fellowship.

Celebration of the Western Christian Churches

The early Western Church decided to celebrate Christmas on December 25, in a contrast to the Eastern Orthodox Church, which commemorated the birth of Christ on January 6.

Epiphanies of Jesus' Glory

Early Christians celebrated Epiphany by recalling the first times disclosed his glory as the Son of God when:

- foreign magi discovered divine royalty in the baby Jesus (Mt. 2)
- *bystanders heard a heavenly voice identify Jesus at his Baptist (Mt. 3)*
- *guests at a merry wedding party in Cana saw Jesus' power in his miracle (Jn. 2). Today we hear and taste and celebrate the discovery, too.*





QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

What is the Epiphany of our Lord?

What does the Word "Epiphany" mean?

What does the church commemorate during Epiphany?

Who were the Magi?

What is the liturgical color for Epiphany?

Why is Epiphany such a special day and season?

WHAT IS THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD?

The Epiphany of our Lord is the wonderful liturgical festival observed on January 6. It is the oldest of the Christmas festivals and originally the most important. Since January 6 is most often a weekday, Lutherans and liturgical Protestants sometimes shift the celebration of Epiphany to the Sunday immediately following the 6th. Epiphany is also a season that lasts until the beginning of Lent and encompasses four to nine Sundays, depending on the date of Easter.

WHAT DOES THE WORD "EPIPHANY" MEAN?

The word epiphany comes from the Greek noun *epiphaneia*, which means "shining forth," "manifestation," or "revelation." In the ancient Greco-Roman world, an epiphany referred to the appearance of one of the gods to mortals. Since Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors were considered by many to be gods, the word epiphany was also used as a term for divine majesty. The Epiphany of our Lord is the Christian festival that celebrates the many ways through signs, miracles, and preaching that Jesus revealed Himself to the world as Christ, God Incarnate, and King of kings.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH COMMEMORATE DURING EPIPHANY?

The Festival of the Epiphany of our Lord originally commemorated three incidents that manifested the mission and divinity of Christ: the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12), the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), and the miracle at Cana (John 2:10-22). Nowadays, most liturgical churches emphasize the visit of the Magi on January 6th and celebrate Christ's baptism on the first Sunday after the 6th.

WHO WERE THE MAGI?

The Magi were members of the religious hierarchy of ancient Persia and Media (the region corresponding to modern Iran). They were scholars and practitioners of astrology, divination, and the interpretation of dreams. Their expertise in these arcane subjects is the reason they were often referred to as "wise men." The Magi of Babylonia undoubtedly came into contact with exiled Jewish priests living among them. Through these acquaintances the Magi learned of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, including the cryptic "messianic star" passage of Numbers 24:17. This explains why the astral phenomenon described in Matthew 2:1-12 so fascinated the wise men of the gospel narrative.

Many pious legends about the wise men have arisen over the centuries. In the western Christian churches, these include the traditions that there were three Magi who visited Jesus, that their names were Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, and that they were kings. To get more detailed information about the Magi, we invite you to read two excellent resources on the subject: *The Magi/Wise Man FAQ* by Rev. Dr. Richard P. Bucher.




 Epiphany continued from page 2

WHAT IS THE LITURGICAL COLOR FOR EPIPHANY?

White, the color of purity, holiness, and joy is the traditional liturgical color for Epiphany, the first Sunday after the Epiphany (the Baptism of our Lord), and the last Sunday after the Epiphany (the Transfiguration of our Lord). For the other Sundays of the season, green is normally used. Green represents the new life that Christ gives us in baptism, as well as the spiritual growth we experience during the season as we study the Lord's ministry of teaching, healing, and miracles. Some churches prefer using white on every Sunday of the Epiphany season and reserve green for the season after Pentecost.

WHY IS EPIPHANY SUCH A SPECIAL DAY AND SEASON?

Epiphany is one of the most important festivals of the liturgical year because it shows the church how God comes to His people. We are so full of sin and deserving of divine punishment that we cannot hope to approach God. Knowing that we cannot come to Him, God took the initiative and came to us by becoming one of us. The most holy and almighty God condescended to take on human flesh in order to reveal His salvation to the world. This is the mystery of the Epiphany of our Lord.

During this season, Christians meditate on many of our Lord's epiphanies. Epiphany Day itself commemorates the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem to worship the Messiah and bring Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:1-12). Since the earliest days of the church, these wise men have been considered to be representatives of all the peoples of the earth. By means of a miraculous star, God showed them that Jesus was born to be not only the King of the Jews, but the Lord and Savior of all nations.

The Baptism of our Lord is the first Sunday after the Epiphany. This important festival is the observance of Jesus' baptism at the hands of John the Baptist (Mark 1:9:11). The words of the Father and the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove as Jesus came out of the waters revealed Him to be God's true Son.

The Transfiguration of our Lord, the last Sunday after the Epiphany, is a celebration of the moment that Christ, in the company of Moses and Elijah, literally shined His glorious divine nature on Peter, James, and John, leaving them dazed and awestruck (Luke 9:28-36). This event, the greatest of Christ's epiphanies until His triumphant resurrection from the grave on Easter, serves as the dramatic conclusion of the season. Transfiguration Sunday stands in vivid contrast to what takes place just a few days later: Ash Wednesday, the day of sorrow and repentance that initiates the season of Lent.

In between the two Sundays that mark the Lord's baptism and transfiguration, the church concentrates on several of the other incidents from Scripture that show how Jesus manifested God's love to the world through His ministry of preaching, miracles, and healings. What is common to each of these epiphanies is that in one way or another they make known the identity and mission of Jesus Christ: True Man and True God, born into this sinful world to be the Lord and Savior of all humanity.

We begin to understand the joy and wonder of Epiphany when we read the story of Simeon (Luke 2:22-35). Simeon was a devout old man who lived in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the promised Messiah with his own eyes. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be consecrated according to Jewish law regarding firstborn males (exodus 13:2), Simeon realized that this infant was the Christ. In joyful response to this personal epiphany, the old man took the baby Jesus in his arms and chanted a magnificent song of thanksgiving best known by its Latin title, *Nunc Dimittis*. We at Saint Paul's, along with Lutheran Christians everywhere, sing Simeon's great canticle at the end of each service of Holy Communion. The words of the *Nunc Dimittis* remind us of the mercy and grace that God revealed to the world in His Son, Jesus Christ:

*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace
 according to Thy word,
 For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation
 Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people:
 A light to lighten the Gentiles
 And the glory of Thy people Israel.*

**Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Anna Lowery, President
November 20, 2023 Council Minutes**



Meeting called to order by President, Anna Lowery

Members present: Anna Lowery, Teri Trudnak, Alice Vlaservich, and Robbie Wooten.
Members Absent: Steve Digh, Becky Messick and Billy Trudnak

Minutes: Motion by Robbie Wooten to approve the October 16, 2023 minutes. Seconded by Teri Trudnak and carried

Reception of Petitions and Communications:
Board reviewed the petition from Gordon Cornwell and agreed to pray for them.

Report of the Pastor: None

Report of the Treasurer: Motion by Alice Vlaservich to accept the October report. Seconded by Anna Lowery and carried.

- Report of the Ministries:**
- a. Property: Activity Building was re-roofed. Commode in men's restroom. New control on hot water tank in Activity Building.
 - b. Stewardship and Finance: None
 - c. Worship & Music: Going to decorate for Advent December 2
 - d. Finance Committee: None
 - e. Youth: None
 - f. Witness: Cards and bulletins continue to be sent to shut ins.
 - g. Christian Education Team: None

- Report of Auxiliaries:**
- a. Prayer Group met at the home of Shirlee Marazza in November
 - b. The Women's Group will meet at the home of Betty Clemmer on December 12 with a luncheon and program.

Old and/or Unfinished Business:
Bill Trudnak agreed to fill the vacant seat on the Board.

- New Business:**
- a. Council agreed to present the 2024 Budget to congregation on December 10 for approval.
 - b. The Board instructed to place in these minutes thanking the individuals that helped with Marilyn Finger's dinner, providing flowers, and the food.
 - c. There will be another covered dish luncheon (Comfort Sunday) on the last Sunday in January. Bring your favorite dish (s)

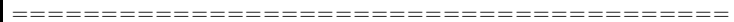
- General Information:**
- a. Attendance
 - b. Laszlo Mission Report
 - c. Donation Summary from Dallas Christian Ministry.
 - d. On November 15 AmeriPro Roofing is working with engineer on best approach to repair Church's roof. They need to keep up updated.

The Council meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is January 15 at 7 pm

**Congregational Meeting-
December 17. 2023**

Present Anna Lowery called the meeting to order and asked for the Proposed budget to be approved. Motion by Alice Vlaservich to approved as presented. Seconded by Robbie Wooten and approved.



The Baptism of Our Lord



The **baptism of Jesus**, the ritual purification of Jesus with water by John the Baptist, was a major event described in the 3 Gospels of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark and Luke). It is considered to have taken place at Al-Maghtas (also called Bethany Beyond the Jordan), today located in Jordan.

Mark, Matthew, and Luke depict the baptism in parallel passages. In all three gospels, the Spirit of God - the Holy Spirit in Luke, "the Spirit" in Mark, and "the Spirit of God" in Matthew - is depicted as descending upon Jesus immediately after his baptism accompanied by a voice from Heaven, but the accounts of Luke and Mark record the voice as addressing Jesus by saying "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased", while in Matthew the voice states "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23)

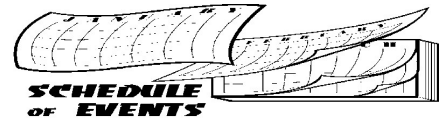
Modern biblical scholars view the baptism of Jesus as a historical event to which a high degree of certainty can be assigned. Along with the crucifixion of Jesus, biblical scholars view it as one of the two historically certain facts about him, and often use it as the starting point for the study of the historical Jesus. Most Christian denominations view the baptism of Jesus as an important event and a basis for the Christian rite of baptism.

It is celebrated in the [Lutheran](#) Churches on the first Sunday following The Epiphany of Our Lord (January 6).

January 2024



Sunday School: 9:45 pm
Church Service: 11:00 pm



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 	2	3	4	5	6
7 	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 2nd Sun. after Epiphany	15 Council Mtg.	16 	17 Prayer for Christian Unity Week	18	19	20
21 3rd Sun. after Epiphany	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 4th Sun. after Epiphany	29 Women's Group	30	31		 Food Collection	 Jan 15

- January 6—Epiphany of Our Lord
- January 7—Baptism of Our Lord
- January 14— 2nd Sunday after Epiphany
- January 15— Council Meeting 7:00 pm
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- January 16—Prayer Group will meet at the Home of Shirlee Marazza at 2:00 pm
- January 18-25—Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- January 21— 3rd Sunday after Epiphany
- January 28— 4th after Epiphany
Comfort Food Luncheon
- January 29— CLW Women's Group

FOOD FOR THE MONTH: **Pork and Beans, Spaghetti, Spaghetti Sauce**

Choir practice each Wednesday at 4:00 pm unless otherwise announced the bulletin

Holy Communion Schedule:



Every Sunday

Worship Service Assistance:

Acolyte: Nora Cole

Communion

Asst: Nora Cole

Lay Reader: Anna Lowery

Worship Asst: Anna Lowery

Greeters: OSLC Members

Ushers: OSLC Members

Birthdays



- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 8 Shirlee Marazza | Doyle Clemmer |
| 15 Mariel Schmedeler | Jacob Finger |
| 16 Brett Lowery | Shana Dease |
| 19 Ashley Holland | Sarah Wooten |
| 20 Noelle S. Agrew | |
| 25 Chris Messick | |
| 26 Carson Dease | |
| 31 Allison Wooten | |

FLOWERS

Flower Schedule:

- January 7 Brady Ratchford
- January 14
- January 21 John & Marsha Patton
- January 28

A NEW FLOWER CALENDAR is post on the first door in the hallway of the Education wing. Please sign up to place flowers on the altar in the glory of God and in honor or memory of your love ones.

COST \$35.00



ANNIVERSARIES



EPIPHANY

Star Light, Star Bright, follow Jesus in the Night.

We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

—Matthew 2:2

The Wise Men were led by a star to see their Savior. During the epiphany season, we celebrate the “stars” in our lives who lead us to Jesus. We are grateful for parent, pastors, teaches, youth directors, friends and other family members who served as the stars that point the way to salvation in Jesus. Now is our time to serve as stars to those around us who are seeking a Saviour from sin, death and the devil.

Invite. Welcome people to go to church with you on Sunday. Bring them to a house of worship increases the potential for them to see the Light of God's ;pave and forgiveness in the face of Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem and is born in our hearts.

Share. Be a beacon of hope and jog to people who find themselves in the darkness of sin, sorrow, sickness or pain of any kind. Reveal to them the glory of God that pierces through the dark times of life and spreads healing, confidence and relief to the suffering.

Sparkle. Let the Light of Christ be reflected in the words you say and the deeds you do in his name. Be generous to one another as the Wise Men were in bringing their gifts to Jesus. Be excited about coming to worship the Lord, as the Wise Men were when they said, “*We have come to worship him.*” Have a reverence about you, as the Wise Men die, who bowed down in the presence of their Savior.

The star they have seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

—Matthew 2:9

Our tasks as “stars” is to keep going, to keep drawing closer to Jesus, no matter how tire we get, no matter how ling it take. How do we do that? By reading the Scripture about those who have gone before us, pointing people to Jesus, such as John the Baptist, the disciples, Mary Magdalene, and the apostle Paul. All them ae our stars, who keep us moving forward in our faith.

John the Baptist: Matthew 3:1-6

The disciples: Mark 1:16-20

Mary Magdalene: John 20: 16-18

Paul: Philippians 3:10-14

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed

—Matthew 2:10

Even as “stars” for Jesus , we can so often lose our joy in the journey of faith. The Wise Men help us to remember that Jesus give us may reasons to celebrate. His birth to Bethlehem on Christmas assures us that he loves us and cares for us and will be with us always, even to the very end of the age. We should continually rejoice in the blessing of his presence and never take it for granted. And our hearts should forever be glad because his salvation is on the horizon for us, through his death and resurrection.

They opened their treasures and present him with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

—Matthew 2:11

The Wise Men are shining examples o us of what is means to give generously to our Lord and Saviour. They gave Jesus their treasures, not their leftovers. They gave Jesus what was precious. We should be just as lavish with our time, talents and possession in response tp what Christ has done for us by coming to earth. What “treasures” can you can give to your Savior today?



GOD'S GLORY IMAGED IN SEXUAL DIFFERENTIATION

Lynnae Douglas, M.A.R. '18 (NALS Seminary Center), NALS Regent
(Article from *Word and Sacrament*—A NALC magazine)

We were in a prominent hospital on the Upper East side of Manhattan, just yards away from the illustrious Central Park, when my husband announced we had another healthy son. A nurse present for this wondrous occasion gruffly muttered under her breath, "It's 2018, the baby can be whatever it wants." I recall being shocked and puzzled, even if delirious, as I watched my husband give a chilling glance. The nurse had unusually poor bedside manners, I supposed, and we dismissed the comment and went on in our joy as we embraced our baby boy.

I had no idea that in only five years, her subversive comment that sounded merely confusing and fringe at the time would underscore the prevailing assumption of gender and personhood in our culture today. What does a body have to do with one's gender? It's 2023, and the reigning idea is that meaning can be imposed on our bodies. Biological limits can be disregarded, or in some cases surgically removed, in favor of this new "Gnosticism," as the inner, psychological self dictates terms and wages war against the confines of the body.

The Christian Church has a different story to tell, and the Church's proclamation of the goodness of the body and the goodness of sexual differentiation has always sounded strange amidst the clamor of fleeting social trends. The Church confesses that human persons were created by God according to His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26–27), and just so are infused with His divine goodness and freedom. It is precisely in our sexed bodies that this image-bearing finds concrete form.

Of course, this image has been marred by the unreality that is sin, but Christ our Lord has nevertheless restored this image to fallen humanity when He took on human flesh as the Image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). This reflection will not account for the distinction between the natural goodness of being made in the image of God and the graced participation in Christ's own life that is beyond natural means.¹ Rather, it will assume the latter and seek briefly to ponder how sexual differentiation relates to bearing the image of God. In other words, what does being made male and female have to do with the eternal glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? I will offer just two answers, and conclude with how we, as members of Christ, might reveal with greater clarity this reality, particularly in our tumultuous cultural moment.

First, males and females living in harmony together reveal in an analogous, creaturely way what is true of Father, Son, and Spirit, that is, that God is three distinct Persons who have one nature. It is as three Persons in perfect unity that the Godhead eternally enjoys fellowship and freedom in self-giving love. Out of this free love God chose to create human beings after His likeness. Males and females reveal this same distinction and unity. Despite the conventional wisdom of our day, males and females are neither interchangeable nor altogether dissimilar. They are not generic beings but bodily distinct human persons who share one nature. Thus, by analogy at least, males and females are uniquely capable of revealing the eternal communion of the Godhead when they yield to one another in acts of mutuality and self-giving love.

Secondly, it is males and females together who reveal the glory of God through subduing creation and begetting children. Adam could name animals and speak with God, but he could not have dominion over the earth and fill it as a solitary human, for this is a "corporate project for a great multitude throughout many generations."² Thus God forms Eve who corresponds to Adam in her bodily "otherness," she is fit for him. Both are fully human, but each lacks that which only belongs to the other. In the union of their bodies, male and female image God's oneness and have the potential to create new human persons on whom God sets His love. God reveals His glory to His creatures as the Source of all that is, and once again in an analogous way, males and females image God by participating with Him in His divinely appointed social order and bearing new life unto His glory.

In our culture today, these two ways that men and women uniquely image the Holy Trinity are seen as regressive ideas that need to be cast aside or at least greatly reduced in their assumed importance. Mutuality and reciprocity do not compute when persons are reduced to categories of power dynamics. Furthermore, being freed of one's reproductive function is viewed as a humanizing, liberating goal so one can escape the constraints and sacrifices that are inherent to child-rearing. Yet the Church has been called to proclaim what is true and lovely and good about human persons—which includes their God-given bodies and their biological capabilities—even to those who are determined to erase creaturely distinctions and natural limitations.

It is by serving, not being served, and losing one's life rather than finding it that we are conformed to the Image and Author of life Himself. When Christ bestows His own life upon us in our baptisms, we are given grace to live out our vocations as husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, neighbor and friend as God intends from the beginning. Husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the Church and wives receiving and honoring their husbands as unto Christ is indeed a mystery that is inherently attractive, for it reveals God's divine glory as it embodies *the* mystery of the Gospel: Christ's one-flesh union with His Bride (Ephesians 5). Parents receiving the gift of new life with joy, trusting that this new person can only come through the union given and blessed by God, bears fruitful witness to a world that often views children as nuisances to avoid.

Moreover, Christian men and women in any community, cooperating together by the power of the Spirit of holiness, are uniquely disposed to recognize the other sex as gift rather than opposition.³

(Imaged cont'd on page 8)

(Imaged cont'd from page 7)

The distinct other may be visibly seen in what is material, being male or female, but Christians are given baptized vision which marvels at the handiwork of God in *the Other*, and lifts the eyes of the Christian to contemplate *the Other*. This vision no longer regards others according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:14–17), which doesn't mean we somehow shed our bodies, but that in our concrete givenness, we see and apprehend with the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:1–5). In our union with Jesus Christ, whether male or female, our differing gifts, capabilities and desires are all being remade in His likeness. The same Spirit that bestows Christ in Baptism enables men and women to see Christ in the other, and so relate and act accordingly.⁴

It is easy to take aim at the absurdity of my nurse's comment and the ideology that undergirds it, and doubtless it is needful to think critically and to speak clearly of this pseudo-religion. But it is much harder to set forth the good that God established from the beginning by living as members of Christ's Body in communion with others, males and females, who make visible what is hidden and eternal. In sacrificing for and receiving the other, and recognizing the goodness of our created differences, we are imitating in a creaturely mode what has always existed in the life of God. We do not know what effect small deeds done in faith might have on a hurting, confused world, but as we share in the life of God through his Son by the Spirit's power, distinctly as males and females, we can trust Christ's words in John 1:5: "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

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1. For an excellent discussion of this distinction, see Dr. David S. Yeago's forthcoming *Apostolic Faith*, pp. 64-65 and 74-75.
 2. Yeago, *Apostolic Faith*, 79.
 3. This point is carefully elaborated in Abigail Favale's *The Genesis of Gender*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2022, 51.
 4. It is worth noting that, just as it would be destructive to affirm the new cultural creed (i.e.: there is no consequential difference between males and females because meaning is assigned to the body), so too it would be destructive to totalize biology in such a way that our whole personhood and way of being in this world is dominated by it. This is a tempting reaction to the current madness, yet it too would be ideology and would not lead us toward the Truth, the Whole Human, who alone sets us free and makes us as we ought to be.



"Beautifully written.!"

1. Prayer is not a "spare wheel" that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a "steering wheel" that directs the right path throughout.
2. A Car's WINDSHIELD is so large & the Rear view Mirror is so small? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, Look Ahead and Move on.
3. Friendship is like a BOOK. It takes a few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.
4. All things in life are temporary. If going well, enjoy it, they will not last forever. If going wrong, don't worry, they can't last long either.
5. Old Friends are Gold! New Friends are Diamond! If you get a Diamond, don't forget the Gold! Because to hold a Diamond, you always need a Base of Gold!
6. Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, GOD smiles from above and says, "Relax, sweetheart, it's just a bend, not the end!
7. When GOD solves your problems, you have faith in HIS abilities; when GOD doesn't solve your problems HE has faith in your abilities.
8. A blind person asked St. Anthony: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?" He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"
9. When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that
10. WORRYING does not take away tomorrow's TROUBLES, it takes away today's PEACE.

**LIFE IS LIKE A COIN,
YOU CAN CHOOSE TO SPEND IT ANYWAY YOU WISH,
BUT YOU CAN ONLY SPEND IT ONCE**

A Stewardship Minute

"Stewardship is how we manage what God has given us in this life." We are each meant to consider whatever we have as gifts from God and to be good managers of those gifts. We each have bodies, brains and talents and time to use all of those gifts to glorify God. Good stewardship involves good management of the totality of God's gifts to us.

An elderly pastor tells the story of a parishioner in a church he was serving. The man took giving and serving the Lord seriously. If anyone asked him why he was so dedicated to using his talents, time, and money for the

Lord's work, he would smile and answer by saying: "The Lord has allowed me to have time, talent, energy, and a good income. If I don't use my assets in the right way, God may stick out his foot and trip me. Then I might lose it all."

He meant his answer to be funny, of course. But it does show that the fellow knew where his time, talent, and financial resources ultimately came from. They came from our loving Creator whose blessings are showered daily upon each of us.

Remember that Jesus said to his followers: "You are the light of the world." He continued by saying "Let

your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5: 3-16) Should we not let our lights shine to glorify our loving Creator?

Prayer: Almighty and loving God, every good gift we have has come from you. Keep us mindful of your care for us and your desire for us to use our minds, bodies, energy and resources to bring light and truth to this often suffering world. Through Christ our Lord, we pray. **Amen**



The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

January 18-25, 2023

"You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 10:27

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2024 was selected by the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Council of Churches, and the Christian Churches in Burkina Faso, coordinated by the community of *Chemin Neuf*, a French Catholic and ecumenical community of vowed and lay people and its local community in Burkina Faso.

The theme, taken from the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, reflects the connection between love of God and love of neighbor with a particular concern for challenging the boundaries of who is considered "neighbor". In this pericope, Jesus is questioned as to the path to eternal life. His answer is not to only observe the commandments, but to also imitate the love of God in the giving of self for another. It is a call for charity, mercy, justice, and unity.

Prayer for Christian Unity is a prayer that seeks to unite all Christians in the world. It is a prayer that asks God to strengthen our faith in Him and lead us to love one another in humility. Here is a prayer for Christian Unity:

Lord Jesus Christ, at your Last Supper you prayed to the Father that all should be one. Send your Holy Spirit upon all who bear your name and seek to serve you. Strengthen our faith in you, and lead us to love one another in humility. May we who have been reborn in one baptism be united in one faith under one Shepherd. Amen



Church News



The Pastor's Numbers

If you need a Pastor, please contact Pastor Pete Feige at 704-516-2805 or our office at 704-922-4648. Check out our website at oslc-nc.org or email us at oslcdallas@aol.com.



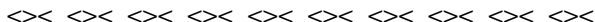
Remember Our SHUT-INS

OUTREACH MISSION

SHUT-INS

Please remember our church members who are shut-ins or reside in a nursing home* and visit them.

(If others, please let the church office know)



EVENTS

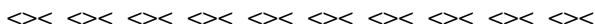
for

Lutheridge -Lutherock,

and

Kure/Agape Beach

Please see enclosed and other information on the bulletin board or go on-line



RACHEL GROUP

The CLW Women's Group will meet on January 29 at the home of Alice Vlaservich.

PRAYER GROUP

The Prayer Group will meet at the home of Shirlee Marazza at 2:00 pm, Jan. 16

Church Business

Annual Report



With the year end close in sight, it will be here before we can say Happy New Year.

Please start working on your Annual Reports, Scheduled for Committee Meeting dates, and Looking Ahead activities, such as: Group Meeting, VBS, Conventions, etc. Please submit by Jan. 15, 2023.

LET US PRAY... "Are any among you suffering? They should pray...The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up." (James 5:13-15)



PRAYER CONCERNS: MARGARET Addington,

SETH Alexander, AMANDA (friend of the Penley's),

MARVIS Anderson, WHITNEY Auten (breast cancer), LEAH

Bredley(Marsha Patton's sister-Pituitary tumor and upcoming

surgery), KELLY Ballard (friend of Shana Dease), NOR-

MAN Bever (Brother-in-law of Brady Ratchford-stroke),

ADDISON Blanton (friend of Dease's), KATHY Bohanan (cancer) , RHON-

DA Bradley (Marsha Patton's mom, surgery for foot fusion), KAREN Brady,

MIKE Coffey (Robbie Wooten's uncle), STEVE Cloninger (friend of Brady

Ratchford-cancer), ROB Curley (cancer), STEVE Digh (cancer), JULIE Digh

(Thyroid), ROWDY and BAILEY Drummond (Becky and Chris Messick new

grandson and daughter), GLEEN Fraizer (friend of Steve & Julie Digh -

cancer), MONA Gardner (John Patton's grandma-declining health), BECKY

Goodwin (friend of Brady's - cancer), JASON Hames (friend of the White's),

GRACE Harbin (friend of Robbie Wooten-cancer), LESA Huges (friend of

Robbie Wooten-throat cancer), JEFF Lineberger (stroke), DANA Kirshman

(friend of Robbie Wooten-cancer), JACK Lonon (Kasey Digh's step-father-

cancer), MARINA Marazza (Shirlee Marazza's granddaughter-Long Haul

Covid19), CARL Martin (friend of Pattons-multiple myeloma plus chemo) BO

Messick (foot), FRANCIS McAllister (broken hip), CHRIS Messick

(recovering back surgery), JASON, ALLISON & LEX Murray, ELIZABETH

Mustin (rare breast cancer), GARY Neal, (friend of Caleb Dease), JOHN &

MARSHA Patton (the in vitro procedure produces healthy baby(ies), ANDY

Peeden (cancer), SONDRRA Phillips (friend of Melinda White), BRADY

Ratchford, LEON Rawlinson (growth in brain), JAN Splawn (friend of Robbie

Wooten- cancer), TERI Trudnak, TONY Trudnak (cancer reoccurring),

,GARY Turner (father of Jason Murray), JEFF White, KENT Wilborn (friend

of Robbie Wooten-heart surgery) NANCY Wilson, MARY BETH Wright

(cousin of Nick Vlaservich -cancer).

ATTENTION: God is calling all of its members of OSLC to assist Him in our worship service. Sign-up sheets for worship assistants for the calendar year of 2023 are posted in the hall way in the Education section of the church. So be a **doer** and **participant** in your service and sign-up. **THANK YOU!**



HUMAN BEINGS AS *IMAGO DEI* IN THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN LUTHER

Dr. Mickey Mattox, Professor of Religion, Hillsdale College

Genesis 1:26–28 famously affirms the creation of humankind “in the image of God” (*imago Dei*). Alright, but to borrow a famous phrase from Martin Luther’s Small Catechism—“What does that mean?”

Today this text is often read cosmologically. The creation of the heavens and the earth amounts to the building of a “cosmic temple.” The creation’s good order parallels the structure of the Temple of ancient Israel. Within this cosmic temple, human beings were endowed with special gifts so they could serve as “priests of creation.” They were icons of God whose task was to represent and co-respond to the Creator while tending to the flourishing of the good creation.

In medieval western theology, readers of Genesis typically understood the image of God within what has been called a “faculty psychology,” an account of the human soul that identified it with capacities. The capacity of the human soul to reason, for example, is grounded in intellectual power, the capacity to make choices in the power of will, and the capacities of perception and movement in the sensitive powers. These discrete capacities are infused by God into the “essence of the soul,” and they equip humankind to carry out the task of re-presenting the Creator to His creation. This is the *imago Dei*.

Of course, Martin Luther knew the Genesis text well. He extolled the co-regency of Adam and Eve before the fall. He also knew and worked with faculty psychology, often without objection. At the same time, he wanted to return theology to its biblical roots. Thus, his work as professor of theology in Wittenberg was focused upon the biblical text itself rather than the standard handbooks of theology. Early on he lectured on the Psalms and Romans. And for the last decade of his career, he turned to Genesis.

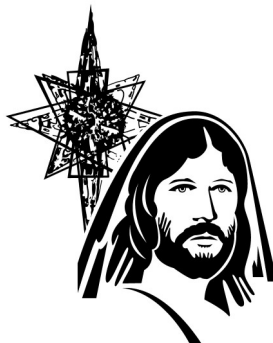
In his Romans lectures, Luther was deeply concerned with grace and human freedom. These concerns raised hard questions about human nature, both as originally created by God and as now vitiated by sin. Can a sinner turn to God and be reconciled by simply exercising his or her natural powers (reason and will)? Some of Luther’s teachers said yes. They insisted that the fallen sinner could love God and turn to Him even without the assistance of grace. “Do what is in you,” it was said, “and God will not deny you grace.” The sinner, on this account, takes the initiative. To that extent, getting right with God—“justification”—is a human work. The supposition behind all this is that the powers of the soul, and with that the image of God, remain intact within us even in our fallen state.

After a struggle with these issues as a young monk, Luther concluded that those teachers were wrong. Here his thinking connected with a crucial problem he faced when lecturing on Romans in the years 1515-16. What does Paul mean by the contrast between flesh and spirit (Romans 8)? Luther’s solution to this classical question was to read the difference not in a “Platonic” way, as a conflict between body and soul, but instead holistically, as two opposed realities pitted against one another within the whole human person. Flesh denotes the whole person under sin, spirit the whole person under grace. Thinking holistically, if sin is *in* a person, then it is in the *whole* person (Romans 7:17).

Luther’s holistic reading of fallen human nature seemed to call into question the image of God. He could even say that humankind was no longer the image of God and had become its opposite: the *imago diaboli*. This notion sparked controversy after Luther’s death. His Croatian disciple, Matthias Flacius, argued that sin *is* the “formal substance” of the fallen person. The Lutheran confessions rejected that position because it makes the human soul evil per se. Because God is the soul’s maker, Flacius cannot be right.

In his Genesis lectures, Luther, too, avoided Flacius’s error. Sin, he said, is a leprosy, a wound, or a corruption. It is not, therefore, “what we are.” Much good remains in the sinner, including the traditional powers of the soul. Still, Luther insists that all these powers have been touched by sin. Sin disables us from experiencing the fullness of joy proper to genuine heartfelt love for God. This is how Luther understands the traditional notion that original sin brought about the loss of “original righteousness.” Considering the *imago dei* holistically, therefore, Luther finds it not only lost but almost unimaginable. For its full restoration, we must await in faith and hope until that good last day.

Article from Word and Sacrament (NALC Magazine)



Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

January 2024

Stewardship

I figure I am pretty much the average man; I've been through the typical headaches on the job, the sorrows and the joys of raising five children, paying my bills and generally dealing with the ups and downs life brings. So when I came to consider the question of what stewardship really means, all I had to draw on was my own experiences and those of friends. As I thought about it, here's what went through my mind: First off, the word "stewardship" bothered me. It wasn't exactly part of my daily vocabulary! But then I realized that there are some words which, through generations of use, have come to express a whole set of intertwined truths. I saw that you and I ... all of us ... take care of things either wisely or badly. There are ruined bodies or well-kept homes, dull knives or good friends, polluted streams or secure, well-loved children.

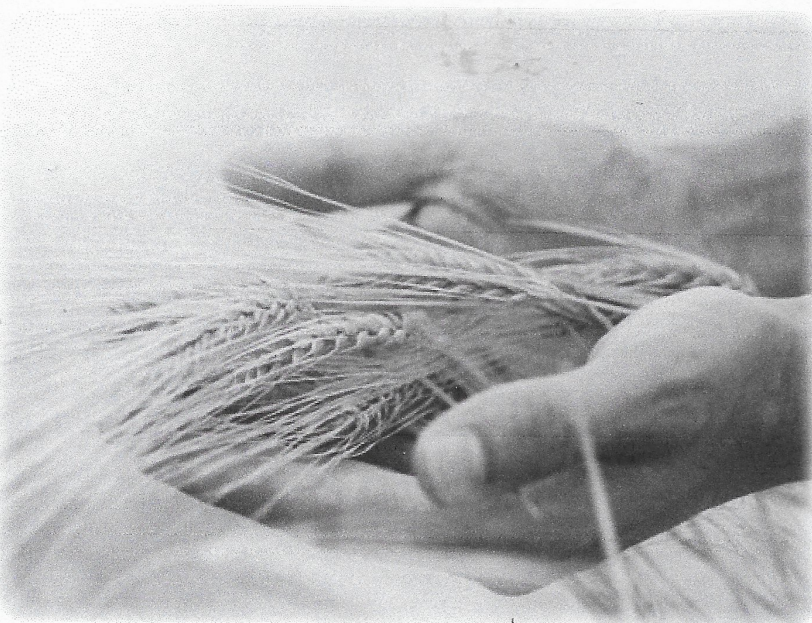
You and I ... all of us ... take care of things either wisely or badly. In the final analysis, we use our time or our abilities or the result of these ... our money ... responsibly or selfishly, thoughtfully or carelessly.

But I've known people who thought, or acted, or said, "I'm a self-made man!" Others showed me, however, that there's no such thing. Where did these priceless gifts of time and ability come from?

A Christian can only answer in humility, "From God."

Showing our gratitude

Further, there can be only one logical reaction for the honest human: Grati-



tude for all God has given us of his free will and love, undeserving as we are.

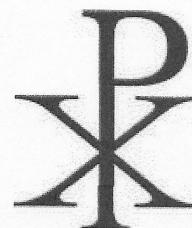
I wrestled for some time over this and what one's response could be. The General Thanksgiving helped. So did the Sacraments and the Bible. Gradually, it became clearer that we can try to use God's gifts in a way that shows our gratefulness. We can think about how we use our time and abilities and our money.

The New Testament is crammed with examples that Jesus gave about such uses. What else really can we give but the application of these to serve God and our fellow humans? And the church in its mission has shown us many concrete and practical ways of applying our time and talents to these goals.

The proper proportion

Money is perhaps the stickiest aspect

A sense of stewardship tells us we must take time to do God's work on earth. When you compare what you have contributed in time, do not compare it to what your fellow church member has done, Compare what you have done to what God has done for you!



No Pockets for Our Stuff!


It is a fact that we all came into this world, at birth, with nothing. No pockets or handbags to carry our stuff. All that we have from birth to death has been a gift from God. It is also fact that when we leave this earth, we will take nothing with us. There are no pockets or handbags with our spiritual eternal life.



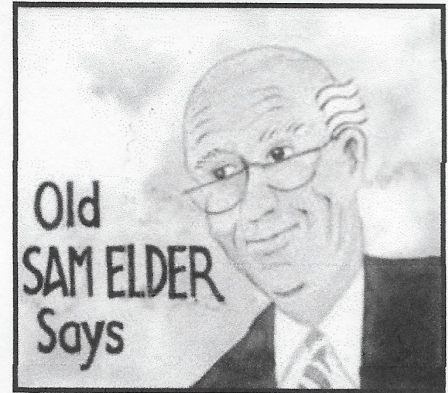
Stewardship is how we manage what God has given us in this life. Stewardship is not a choice that we make. As recipients of God's gifts, we become stewards. The choice we have is to choose to be "good stewards" or "poor stewards." What is your choice?

If we choose to be good stewards, we will realize that all we have comes from God. We will manage our gifts as taught by Jesus. Thus, we move from being good stewards to being good Christian stewards. Stewardship will become a way of life rather than an uneasy subject.

If we choose to do nothing about God's gifts, or if we choose to regard them as our own, we will be unfaithful stewards. Our god will become our material possessions and we may discover a life that reflects greed and selfcenteredness.

Choose today! 

A talent is a talent until it is used to serve God. At that point it becomes a gift of ultimate value, multiplying every time we use it. In man's eyes it may seem insignificant, in God's eyes, you are a superstar.



Jim Newly asked old Sam Elder that frequent question, "How much should I give the church?"

Old Sam answered, "Jim, you are a thinking and a caring person. I will advise you differently than I would someone who must be given rules and limits."


"Don't expect too much from me," Jim answered. "I am not in the comfortable money bracket."

"I can understand that. I want to give you a plan that will make you feel good about your giving," Sam counseled. "I want you to feel good enough about your giving so you would not be embarrassed if they posted the amount on the front door of the church."

"I'm not ready for that much publicity," Jim protested.

"Relax! Your giving is a private covenant between you and your Lord. Only you know your resources. If you live modestly, you should easily manage to give a percentage of income regularly.

Start by giving your Lord his portion first.

Make that a habit. Never become a resentful giver, always thinking of the pleasures you could afford if only God didn't need money now," said Old Sam. "Exult in your giving. What a privilege it is to contribute to bringing God's Kingdom upon this earth." 

The Good Steward


Winter is a time for the garden to be at rest. Beneath the blanket of snow that covers gardens in many parts of America, plants are taking a well deserved rest. Gardeners also have a chance to take a break from their labors. Maybe it is mowing the grass that you really appreciate not having to do, because it seems more like work than gardening.

Life is really about finding a balance between all the competitive interests in our lives. Would a life filled only with pleasure feel rewarding?

People sometimes feel the same way about their church and volunteer activities as they do about their winter gardens. They appreciate a break from

“always having to do” in order to support the activities of the church. After years of service, some folks will say “I’m done. Let someone else carry the burden.”

Yes, we all need a break sometimes, but what would God have us to do? Are you now in the mode of only “being served” versus “serving” in your church?

We all have talents and abilities that can contribute to building the Kingdom of God here on earth. So while the garden sleeps, doesn’t that mean you have a few extra hours each month to serve your church? 




Steward of the Month

Fab Five Plus!

Submitted by: Cindy, Vermillion, SD

As the sun rises ready for a new day, the halls of the church are buzzing each and every Friday morning. A dedicated group that, I believe, began with only 5 people, prepare the food pantry for the food that will soon be brought in, while another dedicated group travels to the local Walmart and pick up the food that they can no longer use. This group starts with the first ones arriving at a little past 6:00 a.m. Remember ... they are volunteers.

They have endured cold, snowy weather that good old South Dakota brings. They all have their jobs and are super organized. They do this with all of their heart, helping the clientele that may be using the food pantry in the future. Many other volunteers are needed to make this mission a reality. They have put in their own time behind the scenes to help out others in the Clay County area.

Hats off to everyone who helps in the Food Pantry. Their numbers are many and they should be thanked. When asked, can you do it? They gladly stepped up and said, “YES we can!” and they do! 

It's tough to include a real pledge of time or money in your New Year's resolutions. Especially when you realize how you will feel if you do not follow through on it. But this is a new year, 2013. Shouldn't it be the cause of each one of us that we will resolve to give our time, and our money, and become a part of the dedicated people of the new year?



“As the sun rises ready for a new day, the halls of the church are buzzing each and every Friday morning.”

Continued from page 1...


Average man...

of this. It was for me, but again, friends showed me that this too can be used wisely or foolishly for God or just for me.

What would be wise here? I have come to believe deeply that a portion of my money, calculated with prayer and great care, should be returned to God for his work. Some of this would be through the church and some through worthwhile community or national charities.

I believe each individual has to determine their own fair share or proper proportion. But he or she can try to be honest with God by setting a goal of a certain percent of their income and then work towards it in steps.

I found that this wasn't easy, but what is that's worthwhile? And God has a way of helping and blessing those who make such a serious and responsible commitment! There are various standards that men and women through the ages have used in this. Jacob said (in Genesis 28:22), “Of all that thou givest me, I will give the tenth to thee.” Others think of a Modern Tithe of 5% of one's net income to the church and 5% to charity.

I'm certain of one thing. The exact figures are not the central issue. No, stewardship is returning in love a thoughtful share of our God-given time, ability and money. 





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JANUARY 2024

