

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
229 11TH AVE W  
GRINNELL IA 50112-8217

*January Newsletter*



# HELLO *January*

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# Pastor's Message

## “The Place of Epiphany”

As you read this, you are either in the midst of Christmas celebration, or in the midst of Epiphany celebration. The season of Epiphany is almost seen as an afterthought to Christmas in the minds of many. We are familiar with Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter. How does Epiphany fit into the puzzle?

In the early days of church history, the resurrection of our Lord was heralded as the most important day. It was celebrated every week, as the believers would gather around God's word and Sacrament in eager anticipation of Christ's return. As the years marched on, Easter became a grand yearly celebration, and times of preparation were developed leading up to it (Lent) and celebration after (Easter Season). Starting in the second century, Christians in the East began to observe the birth of Jesus on January 6th. Western Christians later began to observe the birth of our Lord on December 25th. By the end of the fourth century, churches throughout the world began to celebrate both of these days on their church calendars. The time between December 25 and January 6th was known as the 12 Days of Christmas.

In the beginning the church in the east associated the day of Epiphany with Christ's baptism. In the western church, since Epiphany was after their day of celebration of his birth on December 25th, they associated it with the visit of the wise men—the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. As the church year developed, over “firsts” of Christ's ministry were associated with what now know as the Epiphany season.

The day of Epiphany is always January 6. The length of the Epiphany Season varies from year to year, as it is dependent upon the date of Easter—if Easter is early, Epiphany is shorter. There is a rather interesting aspect to the season as it is marked by two different liturgical colors. It begins and ends with white, which are the colors of festivity. As a bridge from Jesus' birth to His suffering, crucifixion and death, it shows Jesus' living life as God in the flesh. We trace some important events from His baptism to His transfiguration. For the Sundays between these two events, the color is green; the same color during the Trinity Season in which we mark ordinary time. Jesus lived as an ordinary man, like each of us; yet He was at the same time fully God.

This is epiphany. We use this same term today to describe a moment of revelation, or a realization of some aspect affecting our lives; an eye-opening tick of time where all the pieces come together and it just makes sense. The epiphanies spoken of are not our moments of realization; they are His revealing Himself to us.

The illuminating knowledge of Christ is the point of the texts read during the Epiphany season. We begin with the coming of the Magi, bringing gifts that proclaim to the world the very work of the Christ-child. Gold proclaims His kingly office and His divinity. Frankincense proclaims the sacrifice He was to offer upon the cross. Myrrh proclaims He was to die; die to destroy the power of sin, death, and the devil.

Following the coming of the Magi, we read of Christ's baptism. As He descends into the waters, He bears our iniquities. He takes our sins upon Himself, so that in our baptism He may bestow His life upon us.

Next we read of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana. He demonstrates that not only does He have power over the natural forces of the world, He also upholds the honor of marriage. Why? Because He uses the marriage relationship to teach us something about His relationship to us, His bride, the Church. The rest of the texts throughout the Epiphany season are meant to show the baby whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, is in fact also fully God.

The last Sunday of the Epiphany season we read again of Jesus' transfiguration. In a few brief moments, the veil of humanity is lifted and the disciples behold the glory of Christ; they will need this strength to make it through the events of Holy Week. As they watch Jesus suffer, they know He will come again in glory.

The Season of Epiphany is a wonderful time of celebration. We are ever in need of the remembrance of who Christ is. He is God in the flesh. He was born. He lived a human life, was tempted and never failed. He suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. All of this so that we may be His own, and live under Him in His Kingdom for all eternity. Just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

+Soli Deo Gloria+  
Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepp

## Hymn O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright

LSB 395



1 O Morn-ing Star, how fair and bright! You shine with God's  
2 Come, heav'n-ly Bride-groom, Light di - vine, And deep with - in  
3 Lord, when You look on us in love, At once there falls  
4 Al - might - y Fa - ther, in Your Son You loved us when



own truth and light, A - glow with grace and mer - cy!  
our hearts now shine; There light a flame un - dy - ing!  
from God a - bove A ray of pur - est plea - sure.  
not yet be - gun Was this old earth's foun - da - tion!



Of Ja - cob's race, King Da - vid's son, Our Lord and mas -  
In Your one bod - y let us be As liv - ing branch -  
Your Word and Spir - it, flesh and blood Re - fresh our souls  
Your Son has ran - somed us in love To live in Him



ter, You have won Our hearts to serve You on - ly!  
es of a tree, Your life our lives sup - ply - ing.  
with heav'n-ly food. You are our dear - est trea - sure!  
here and a - bove: This is Your great sal - va - tion.





Low - ly, ho - ly! Great and glo-rious, All vic - to - rious,  
Now, though dai - ly Earth's deep sad - ness May per - plex us  
Let Your mer - cy Warm and cheer us! O draw near us!  
Al - le - lu - ia! Christ the liv - ing, To us giv - ing



Rich in bless - ing! Rule and might o'er all pos - sess - ing!  
And dis - tress us, Yet with heav'n - ly joy You bless us.  
For You teach us God's own love through You has reached us.  
Life for - ev - er, Keeps us Yours and fails us nev - er!

5 O let the harps break forth in sound!  
Our joy be all with music crowned,  
Our voices gladly blending!  
For Christ goes with us all the way—  
Today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!  
His love is never ending!  
Sing out! Ring out!  
Jubilation!  
Exultation!  
Tell the story!  
Great is He, the King of Glory!

6 What joy to know, when life is past,  
The Lord we love is first and last,  
The end and the beginning!  
He will one day, oh, glorious grace,  
Transport us to that happy place  
Beyond all tears and sinning!  
Amen! Amen!  
Come, Lord Jesus!  
Crown of gladness!  
We are yearning  
For the day of Your returning!

*Text: tr. Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, alt. Text and tune: Philipp Nicolai, 1556–1608. Text: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110001879. Tune: Public domain*

# President's Piece for Peace

How quickly the clock moves. We are entering into a new year because God has given us more time on this earth to live for Him and gather for His Kingdom. Time is not something God is bound to. He created it and can end it whenever He wants. Time is simply an element of measurement so we can mark out the day, week, month, year, and so on. It is valuable to us as we set schedules and deadlines. As time marches on, so do the tasks we wish to accomplish in the allotted time given from God.

As I said, time is an element of measure for us who live in the flesh. King Solomon wrote about time as the Holy Spirit led him to pen the book of Ecclesiastes. In the third chapter of that book, first verse, he says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." It is because we live under heaven (on the earth) that we leave 2024 behind and welcome 2025. We live here and are bound to the time that moves forward until God decides to end it.

Therefore, time is a gift from God. As a gift, it is appreciated and exercised with faithfulness to the reason that we are afforded it. During the time of the Church (the time we are living in right now) it is our privilege to spend it with Jesus as He comes to us in His Word and Sacraments. The Word of God and the Sacraments come to us from eternity that we may be fed now and prepared to live when there is no more measurement of time. In heaven there will be no more measure of time. It will only be eternity, eternal bliss. The flesh by which we lived in this life will be raised from the dead, but from then on it will be incorruptible. There will be no death in heaven because there will be no sin. It will be a constant now of eternity worshipping the Lord in all His glory.

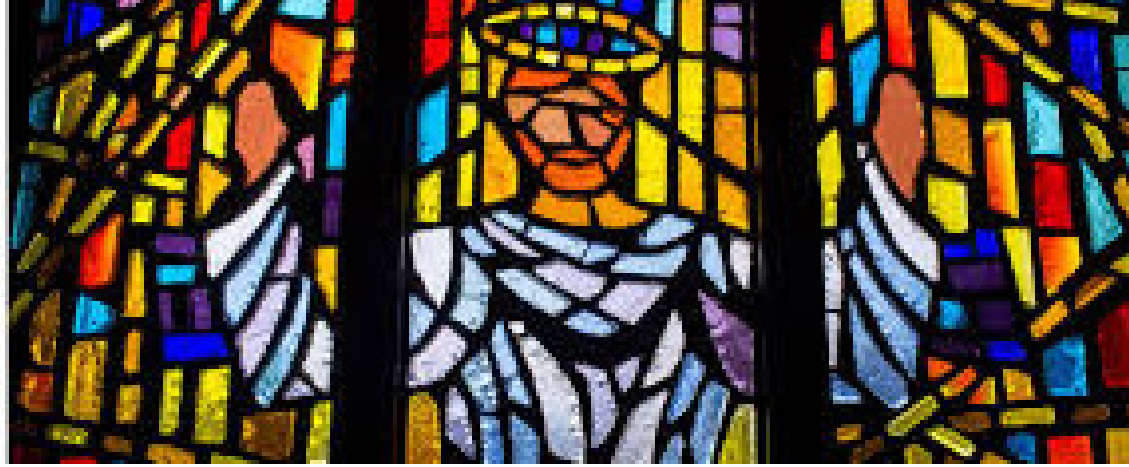
**In heaven there will be no more measure of time. It will only be eternity, eternal bliss.**

While we look forward to the certainty of that promise being fulfilled in our lives, we still live in time now. For each year, month, day, hour and even for each minute in time we have another privilege. We are allowed to speak the Holy Gospel. The opportunity to speak forth words that flow from our lips to other ears is this: "God is not against you. He is for you in His Son Christ Jesus." There are so many ways we can tell of Christ to our neighbor. God is affording us time for so many reasons, but none more important than inviting folks to Church where the Word of God transcends time that it may enter the ears of the sinner where it brings peace to the conscience and rest for the soul.

Our prayer, each and every day given us, is that opportunities may arise for giving witness to Christ Jesus. I pray our new year of 2025 would find us loving the time we have, and leading others to the time when time will cease, and eternal bliss will go on without end.

Happy and Blessed New Year,

Rev. Dr. Brian S. Saunders  
District President



**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
LCMS Stewardship Ministry – [lcms.org/stewardship](http://lcms.org/stewardship)  
Newsletter Article – January 2025**

***Repenting of “Feasts that Know No Fast”***

Fresh off the Christmas season and the retail frenzy that accompanies it, January brings a shot of frigid air into the lives of the people we know and love. This is not a meteorological statement either. While it is true that January is one of the colder months for those in North America, the cold front blast that hits us is the full force of credit card spending that fueled the retail frenzy. The bills for the gifts, the parties, the food and the travel have now come due. The credit card makes things convenient, but it also requires more discipline than many can muster. When the bills come in January for December’s celebration, it really puts a damper on things.

Congregations often make the same mistake in stewardship. We often charge forward in doing what we always do or starting new endeavors without counting the cost. But at the end of the month, or the end of year, when the bill comes due, the red ink on the congregational balance sheet smacks the people in the face like a stiff north wind in January. We hunkered down. We circle the wagons. We start to panic. The work of the Gospel suffers.

The fifth verse of “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (*LSB* 788) addresses this January situation. The words penned by William Watkins Reid are very needful for us to hear as we start a new year, while dealing with the bills of past efforts and expense.



*“Forgive us, Lord for feast that knows not fast ...”* This hits us hard, doesn’t it? We love when the money is flowing, the parties are going, and things are getting bigger and better. But there is a time in life, and most especially in our spiritual disciplines, that we need to fast. The purpose of a fast is to step back, lay something aside for a time, and replace it with meditation on Scripture and prayer. This is designed to keep us from turning something that may well be good into an idol that separates us from the God who loves us in Christ.

*“For joy in things that meanwhile starve the soul ...”* In “The Parable of the Sower,” we hear Jesus talk about how the worries and cares of life choke out the growth of the seed of the Word that was planted. We know how this happens in our lives. Professional and youth sports do this. Materialism does this. Travel and leisure and do this. There is a list of things that we enjoy that starve the soul.

But it also happens in our congregations. When corporate stewardship is not managed in a responsible way, it can and does destroy individual stewardship. Is it good individual stewardship to support a ministry that doesn’t take its corporate responsibility seriously?

*“For walls and wars that hide your mercies vast and blur our vision of the Kingdom goal.”* This is the ultimate end of the idolatry of failed stewardship. We build walls between believers within the church and hamper those who are outside from coming to the Light of Life that is Jesus. The wars we fight over money and its impact on ministry do the same. It eventually blurs our vision of what we are here to do: share the Good News of Jesus. When the wintry blast of January hits us in this fashion, we are called to repent.

When the Holy Spirit uses the cold front of the call to repentance, we meet the God who forgives and restores. That is what He does for individual and corporate stewards. When the bills hit, they call us back to Jesus. He is the One who indeed forgives us our shallow thankfulness and leads us into the bounty of His mercy yet again.



# LUTHERAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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Immanuel Lutheran Church  
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229 11th Ave W  
Grinnell, IA 50112-8217

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Dear Rev. Koeppe,

*For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:28, ESV)*

That Reformation message continues to resound, all the more so in an increasingly dark world. The hope of the Gospel by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is where we stand and will continue to stand. As the Lutheran Heritage Foundation celebrates its 32nd year of translating, publishing, distributing and introducing books that are Bible-based, Christ-centered and Reformation-driven, we thank you for your steadfast support of this mission.

What began in Russia thirty-two years ago after the fall of communism has now expanded to 170 languages in 96 countries. It is by God's grace alone that this work has spread because we know His desire is that all would come to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.


God's peace and grace be with you all this Reformation season,

*Matthew Heise*  
Rev. Dr. Matthew Heise  
Executive Director of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation

**LHF BOOK OF THE MONTH:**

**Thai Jesus Never Fails devotion booklet**

Your gifts are sending Bible devotions to suffering Thai families who have suffered severe floods.



*Thank you very much, Immanuel and Rev. Dr. Koeppe, for your generous support of LHF! We are most grateful! A blessed Thanksgiving,*

THIS IS YOUR GIFT RECEIPT. Please retain for tax purposes. No goods or services were exchanged for this charitable donation. Your tax-deductible contribution: **\$930.00** received on **11/5/2024** to **General Mission Fund**

**Returning this portion with your next gift helps ensure proper designation.**

*Please make checks payable to "The Lutheran Heritage Foundation" and use the envelope provided.*

Direct my gift to:

- The same fund as before: **General Mission Fund**
- A different project \_\_\_\_\_
- Where needed most

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
The Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koeppe  
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*Rev. Koeppe & People of Immanuel,  
your special mission gift is  
greatly appreciated.  
R. R. Rahay, Founder*



# Voters' Assembly

## **Voters' Assembly Sunday, January 19, 2025** **After the Divine Service**

If you are not a member and desire to become one:

- 4.3.1 *Definition: Voting members are communicants who have reached the age of 18 years and who have been received by the Voters' Assembly.*
- 4.3.2 *Reception: Applicants for voting membership shall have received a copy of the constitution and be given time to review it. They shall be received as voting members by presenting themselves at a meeting of the Voters' Assembly and signing the constitution.*



# Confirmation

## ***MEMORY WORK SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY***

### **5th & 6th Grade Memory Work**

**Jan. 1 • No Class**

**Jan. 8 • 2nd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 15 • 3rd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 22 • 3rd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 29 • Review/Test over Creed**

### **8th Grade Memory Work**

**Jan. 1 • No Class**

**Jan. 8 • 2nd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 15 • 3rd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 22 • 3rd Article & Meaning**

**Jan. 29 • 3rd Article & Meaning**



# Thank You



**Thank you to many, many people for their efforts and contributions towards the Children's Christmas Program**

- *The students for their voices in word and song*
- *Sunday School teachers for working with the students*
- *Board of Education for working with the students*
- *Fellowship hall decoration*
- *Cookie providers and servers*
- *Treat bags donators and preparation*
- *Program editing, rehearsing, directing and even more*
- *Music practice and accompaniment*
- *Costume fitting and modifications*
- *Parents for transportation and memorization assistance/encouragement*