



Our Saviour's Good News

Volume XVIII, Issue I

January 2023

MISSION STATEMENT

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

Inside this issue:

- **Minutes** 3
- **The Day Of The Epiphany** 4
Beautiful Written
- **Calendar & Events** 5
*Worship Assistances
Flower Calendar*
- **A Stewardship Minute** 6
God's Cake
- **Lutheridge/Lutherock** 7
*Agape/Kure Beach Ministry
Our Shut-Ins
Annual Report
Worship Assistances
Prayer Concerns
Rachel Group
Prayer Group*
- **The Apples And Jesus** 8
- **Q&A About The Epiphany** 9
Of Our Lord
- **Epiphany** 11
- **Storms Date Back to Biblical** 12
*Times
High-Fructose Corn Syrup*
- **Prayer Week For Christian** 13
Unity
- **Stewardship Newsletter** 14



Comfort for the Connecticut Event

Twas' 11 days before Christmas, around 9:38 when 20 beautiful children stormed through heaven's gate.

Their smiles were contagious, their laughter filled the air. They could hardly believe all the beauty they saw there. They were filled with such joy, they didn't know what to say. They remembered nothing of what had happened earlier that day.

"Where are we?" asked a little girl, as quiet as a mouse. "This is heaven" declared a small boy. "We're spending Christmas at God's house." When what to their wandering eyes did appear, but Jesus, their savior, the children gathered near. He looked at them and smiled, and they smiled just the same. Then He opened His arms and He called them by name. And in that moment was joy, that only heaven can bring those children all flew into the arms of their King and as they lingered in the warmth of His embrace, one small girl turned and looked at Jesus' face and as if He could read all the questions she had He gently whispered to her, "I'll take care of Mom and Dad." Then



He looked down on earth, the world far below, He saw all of the hurt, the sorrow and woe. Then He closed His eyes and He outstretched His hand, "**Let My power and presence re-enter this land!**" "**May this country be delivered from the hands of fools.**" "**I'm taking back my nation. I'm taking back my schools!**"

Then He and the children stood up without a sound. "Come now my children, let me show you around." Excitement filled the space, some skipped and some ran. All displaying enthusiasm that only a small child can and I heard Him proclaim as He walked out of sight, "**In the midst of this darkness, I AM STILL THE LIGHT.**"

Written by Cameo Smith, Mt. Wolf, PA

ONLY GOD IS BIG ENOUGH

The tragedy that shook Newtown, Connecticut, and indeed the entire nation, defies analysis. What must have gone on in the mind of this young man for him to walk into a school of little children and wreak such devastating carnage numbs the soul. At the same time this was happening, I was under the surgeon's blade for minor surgery. When I left the recovery room and returned home, among the first pieces of news on my phone was the news of this mass killing. Something within me hoped that I was still not clear-headed, but I knew deep inside that I was reading an unfolding story of horror and tragedy. What does one say? What is even appropriate without violating somebody's sacred space and their right to scream in protest?

I am a father and a grandfather. I simply cannot fathom the unbearable weight within a parent's or grandparent's heart at such a personal loss. It has often been said that the loss of a child is the heaviest loss to bear. I have no doubt that those parents and grandparents must wonder if this is real or simply a terrifying nightmare. My heart and my prayers are for them and, indeed, for the family of the assassin. How his father will navigate through this will be a lifelong journey.

When a mass-killer like this ends by taking his own life, there is an even deeper sense of loss. Everyone wants to know, "Why?" Not that the answer would soften the blow but it would at least give some clue, some release to speak, to hear, to try to work through. But all we are left with is twenty-eight funerals and lifelong grief. To all of those who have suffered such loss, may the Lord carry you in His strength and bear you in your grief. You will be in our thoughts and prayers.

(God cont'd on page 2)

(God cont'd on page 1)

My own attempt at saying something here is feeble but carries a hope that somebody listening will make this world a better place. My heart goes back to Angola Prison in Baton Rouge where I met such people whose savagery took them to that destination. It was interesting to see a Bible in every cell and to hear many talk of how it had become their only means of life and hope. Someone with me said, "If we had more Bibles in our schools maybe we would need less of them here." To the skeptic and the despiser of belief in God, I know what they will respond. I am quite convinced that the one who argues against this ends up playing God and is ultimately unable to defend any absolutes. Hate is the opposite of love and while one breathes death, the other breathes life. That is what we need to be addressing here. The seeds of hate sooner or later bear fruit in murder and destruction. Killers are not born in a moment. Deep beneath brews thinking and the animus that in a moment is uncorked. We are living in a society that nurtures hate on many sides with the result that lawlessness triumphs.

Even in ideal settings, killing can take place. Murder began in the first family when a brother could not stand the success of his sibling. The entire history of the Middle East—five millennia—is a tale of two brothers. Centuries of killing has not settled the score. Maybe in Adam Lanza's case we will find a deep psychological reason behind what he did. But that does not diminish the reality that there lurks many a killer whose moment will come and the nation will be brought to tears again. We can almost be certain of that. Yes, we can discuss all the symptomatic issues—security, gun control, early detection signs, and so on. These are all worthy of discussion. But it's always easier to deal with the symptoms rather than with the cause.

I wish to share what I think we must address or we head down the slope to a precipitous edge of brutality. The fiscal cliff is tame by comparison to the moral devastation ahead if we do not recognize the malady for what it is. Hate is the precursor to murder. Jesus made that very clear. Playing God is the dangerous second step where we feel we are the ultimate judge of all things and that we have the right to level the score.

Here, I would like to address our political leaders and media elite: You may personally have the moral strength to restrict your ideas to mere words but many who listen to you do not. To take the most sacred privilege of democracy and transform it into the language of aggression plays right into the hands of hate-mongers. This is not the language of a civil society or of wise leadership. It is not the ethos of a culture of co-existence. It is not the verbal coinage with which we can spend our way into the future. Our political rhetoric is fraught with division, hate, blame, and verbal murder. Our young are listening. Remember that what you win them with is what you win them to.

As for the entertainment world, what does one even say at a time like this? Calling for gun control and then entertaining the masses with bloodshed is only shifting the locus from law to entertainment. Do our entertainers ever pause to ask what debased values emerge from their stories? The death of decency is audible and visible in what passes as movie entertainment and political speech. This is the same culture that wishes to take away Nativity scenes and Christmas carols from our children. God is evicted from our culture and then He is blamed for our carnages. America is lost on the high seas of time, without chart or compass. The storms that await us will sink this nation beyond recognition if we do not awaken to the rapid repudiation of the values that shaped this nation. The handwriting is on the wall. Freedom is not just destroyed by its retraction. It is destroyed even more painfully by its abuse.

There is one more thing. It is so obvious but is seldom ever addressed. All these recent mass murders have been done by men. Many of them young men, yes, even mere boys. Jonesboro, Columbine, Virginia Tech, now Newtown. Is there something within our culture that doesn't know how to raise strength with dignity and respect? Is this how boys are meant to be? From bloodletting in hockey games while thousands cheer to savagery in school shootings while thousands weep, we must ask ourselves what has gone wrong with us men? Where are the role models in the home? Is knocking somebody down the only test left for strength? Is there no demonstration now of kindness, gentleness, courtesy, and respect for our fellow human beings? One young man on death row in Angola Prison told me that he started his carnage as a teenager. Now in his thirties with the end of the road in sight, he reached his hand out to me and asked me to pray with him. Life was lost at the altar of power and strength.

The Bible only speaks of one remedy for this: the transformation of the heart by making Christ the center. Those who mock the simplicity of the remedy have made evil more complex and unexplainable. Every heart has the potential for murder. Every heart needs a redeemer. That is the message of Christmas. The world took that child and crucified Him. But by his triumph over death He brings life to our dead souls and begins the transformation within. Unto us a child is born and He shall save us from our sins.

Before the first murder was committed, the Lord said to Cain, "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." To gain mastery over sin there is only one way. Just as Victoria Soto put herself in the way so that the children in her class might live, Jesus Christ put himself in the way that we all might live. That is the beginning of the cure for us as individuals and as a nation. All the laws in the world will never change the heart. Only God is big enough for that.

Article by Ravi Zacharias, theologian, teacher, lecturer, and founder of Ravi Zacharias Ministries

**Our Saviour Lutheran Church
Anna Lowery, President
October 17, 2022 Council Minutes**



Meeting called to order by President, Anna Lowery

Devotions: Robbie Wooten

Members present: Melinda White, Anna Lowery, Robbie Wooten, Teri Trudnak, Becky Messick, Steve Digh, Nick Vlaservich for Alice Vlaservich

Members Absent: Alice Vlaservich

Minutes: August 8, 2022 minutes were reviewed; Robbie Wooten made the motion to approve the minutes and Anna Lowery gave the second motion

Reception of Petitions and Communications:

HCLC Council members presented a proposal of joining services, especially the 11 am service. They are looking at a way of increasing member attendance and congregational membership. Ideally, they proposed the 11 am service be held at HCLC and utilize their larger space and facility for future endeavors. OSLC Council discussed the pros and cons of this proposal. At this time OSLC did not want to move forward with joining services. OSLC will continue to support area Lutheran functions and activities throughout the community.

Report of the Pastor: Reviewed and approved by Council. Melinda White made the motion to approve and Teri Trudnak gave the second. Pastor Pete would like to have a table for Communion in the Chancel facing the congregation. This was also approved by the Council.

Report of the Treasurer: Report was reviewed, and a motion was made by Anna Lowery to accept the Treasurer Report and seconded by Robbie Wooten.

Report of the Ministries:

- a. Property: Shrubs were trimmed, and mulch put out. This was an outsourced job. Also need to get a few tree limbs removed/trees trimmed.
- b. Stewardship and Finance: None
- c. Worship & Music: Working on upcoming Christmas services
- d. Youth Team: No report this month
- e. Witness: Cards and prayers continue to be sent to shut ins. Alice is also sending bulletins to those unable to attend worship service.
- f. Christian Education Team: None

Report of Auxiliaries: Prayer Group continues to meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 1:30pm (note time change)

Old and/or Unfinished Business:

Trimming of Crape Myrtles to be scheduled in February. A congregation member paid for the first stage of this work.

New Business:

The church water line that feeds parsonage, church and activity building has experienced five water leaks, plus someone has prayed for you

Dallas adjusted two bills. This line is old and needs to be replaced. Suggestion was made to use memorial fund to help pay for the repairs. Bill Trudnak is obtaining estimates. This is a major repair. As noted, the church needs some major repairs and maintenance in several areas. Please be prayerful on these needs. We have about \$8500 in memorial funds available.

Supply Pastor issue: The current accepted rate for a supply pastor is \$175-\$225 plus mileage. We have been paying \$150 plus mileage. OSLC will increase to \$200 plus mileage.

Budget meeting to be determined. Special meeting to approve the upcoming budget; suggested 12/11/2022 for congregation to approve budget.

General Information:

Attendance: BRING A FRIEND!!

Laszlo Mission Report

New gutters with guards are on the parsonage now and new gutters/guards will be installed on Activity Building.

Thank you all for continued support through prayer and donations.

The Council meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is December 19, 2022 at 7pm

Alice Vlaservich- Devotions

November 13, 2022 Council Minutes

Council meet in special session after church to approve the proposed 2023 Budget and present to the congregation on December 18. The letter is to be mailed out calling for the Congregational Meeting along with a copy of the 2023 Proposed budget.

Present were: President Anna Lowery, Teri Trudnak, Alice Vlaservich and Robbie Wooten

**Congregational Meeting-
December 18, 2022**

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

The Day of Epiphany



On the day we call **The Epiphany of our Lord**, astrologers from the Near East found the world power predicted by their cosmic calculations -- the God-man, Jesus. Were they disappointed at the humble baby shown proudly by working-class parents, Mary and Joseph?

The Day of Epiphany was known in the earliest Christian centuries as the *Feast of the Manifestation*, the *Theophany*, and even as the *Feast of Light*. By the second or third century A.D., Epiphany was observed in the Eastern Church, second only to Easter in importance. The Eastern Church celebrated the fact that God became man more than Jesus' birth date.

Christians in the East may have set the date of Epiphany to replace a popular festival, just as Roman Christians may have done in choosing a date for Christmas. Epiphany became the day to receive new members through baptism who were called *illuminandi* - those who were about to be enlightened by Christ, the **Light of the World**.

The Day of Epiphany is a celebration by us who are not descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a celebration that hope -- light in the darkness -- is ours too in Jesus Christ, the Lord!

In this way, the Day of the Epiphany opens a season of light -- the Lord's light -- that has entered our lives and helps us see beyond the darkness, and energizes our lives with his work in the world.

Today little is made of the "Old Christmas," the Epiphany revelation of the Saviour. In the western world all our attention goes to the heartwarming scenes of Christmas. Yet, along with our Lord's resurrection on Easter, the Epiphany revelation of God to the people of the world is an equally mind-boggling history-changing event.

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.

+++++

"Beautifully written.!"

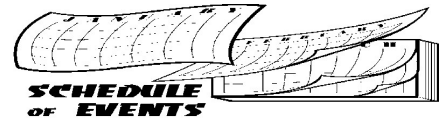
1. Prayer is not a "spare wheel" that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a "steering wheel" that directs the right path through-out.
2. A Car's WINDSHIELD is so large & the Rear view Mirror is so small? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, Look Ahead and Move on.
3. Friendship 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**

January 2023



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 Team Meetings	10	11	12	13	14
15 	16 Council Mtg.	17 	18 Prayer for Christian Unity Week	19	20	21
22 2nd Sun. after Epiphany		24	25	26	27	28
29 3rd Sun. after Epiphany	30 Rachel Group	31				

- **January 8—Epiphany of Our Lord**
Installation of New Council Members
- **January 9—Team Meetings**
All Teams 7:00 pm
- **January 15—Baptism of Our Lord**
- **January 16—Council Meeting 7:00 pm**
- **January 17—Prayer Group** will meet at the Home of Shirlee Marazza at 1:30 pm
- **January 16—Council Meeting**
- **January 18-25—Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**
- **January 22—2nd Sunday after Epiphany**
- **January 23—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**
- **January 29 3rd after Epiphany**
- **January 30—Rachel Group (see)**

FOOD FOR THE MONTH: **Pork and Beans**



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

FLOWERS

Flower Schedule:

- January 1 Brady Ratchford
- January 8
- January 15 John & Marsha Patton
- January 22
- January 29

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.

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 | |



ANNIVERSARIES

23rd*Bryan and Jill Petzold*

A Stewardship Minute

Sometimes when we read something, a sentence will leap off the page and we are compelled to stop to ponder what we have just read. A short sentence in the January issue of *Stewardship* stopped me cold! It read: ***Stewardship is liberating.*** (Pause) I want to repeat that for you: ***Stewardship is liberating.*** I asked myself: Is it true? After mulling it over for a few minutes, I concluded that true stewardship is indeed liberating.

First, stewardship compels us to love God with our hearts, minds, and strength. Once we have chosen to love

and serve God in that manner, we don't have to struggle any longer with how we will handle our decisions. We are either workers for God or we are not. Our choices will either honor God or they won't. When we give our lives unconditionally to the love and service of God, we will find liberation and blessings galore. Secondly, true stewardship will free us from wasting our time, talent, and energy on things that are foolish, or harmful to our bodies, minds, and spiritual life. Christ warned us against shallow, wasteful living. He said "Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide that leads to destruction, and

there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Matthew 7:13-14

Real stewardship is sometimes difficult and often challenging, but if we practice it, you can be certain that it is liberating and always a genuine blessing. That is Christ's promise!

Prayer: Help us always remember Lord, that we find only true freedom in loving and serving you as dedicated stewards. In Christ's name, **Amen**



GOD'S CAKE

Sometimes we wonder,
'What did I do to deserve this?' or
'Why did God have to do this to me?'

Here is a wonderful explanation!

A daughter is telling her Mother how **everything is going wrong**, she's failing algebra, her boyfriend broke up with her and her best friend is moving away.

Meanwhile, her Mother is baking a cake and asks her daughter if she would like a snack, and the daughter says,

'Absolutely Mom, I love your cake.'

'Here, have some cooking oil,' her Mother offers.

'Yuck' says her daughter...

'How about a couple raw eggs?' 'Gross, Mom!'

'Would you like some flour then?'

Or maybe baking soda?'

'Mom, those are all yucky!'

To which the mother replies:

'Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves.

But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! 'God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such **bad** and **difficult times**. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make **something wonderful!**

God is crazy about you.

He sends you flowers every spring and

A sunrise every morning.

Whenever you want to talk, He will listen.

He can live anywhere in the universe,

And He chose your **heart**.

Life may not be the party we hoped for, but while we are here we might as well dance!



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.



OUTREACH MISSION

SHUT-INS

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

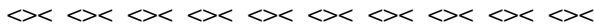
Marilyn Finger

2701 Jackson Square, Andersin, SC 29625

Jill Petzold

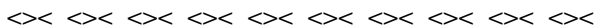
Morning Side of Gastonia
Jill Petzold, Rm 232
2755 Union Rd., Gastonia, NC 28054

(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 Rachel Group will meet on January 30 TBA

PRAYER GROUP

The Prayer Group will meet at the home of
Shirlee Marazza at 1:30 pm

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, 2022.

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), KELLY Ballard (friend of Shana Dease), ADDISON Blanton (friend of Dease's), KATHY Bohanan (cancer), RONDA Bradley (Marsha Patton's mom, surgery for neck fusion), KAREN Brady, MIKE Coffey (Robbie Wooten's uncle), STEVE Cloninger (friend of Brady Ratchford-cancer), ROB Curley (cancer), STEVE Digh (cancer), HARDY Feige (Pete's dad - chronic back pain), GLEEN Fraizer (friend of Steve & Julie Digh -cancer), NANCY Friday, DON Gardner (John Patton's uncle -cancer in lung, liver, stomach, & pancreas), BECKY Goodwin (friend of Brady's - cancer), JASON Hames (friend of the White's), GRACE Harbin (friend of Robbie Wooten-cancer), ANDERSON Jones (friend of Penny Wilson-paralyzed by fall), 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), 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), SONDRRA Phillips (friend of Melinda White), TERI Trudnak, RONNIE Shiles (friend of Brady Ratchford-declining health), MARTHA Surratt (friend of Alice Vlaservich-cancer). TONY Trudnak (cancer reoccurring), STEVE Trudnak (lung cancer),GARY Turner (father of Jason Murray), ALICE Vlaservich (fluid), TIM Vaughan (friend of Robbie Wooten-declining health). JOE White (stroke), MELINDA White (blood cancer.), NANCY Wilson, REESE Wilson (blood cancer). 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 2022 are posted in the hall way in the Education section of the church. So be a **doer** and **participat** in your service and sign-up. THANK YOU!

The APPLES & JESUS



A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago . They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen, inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly-missed boarding... ALL BUT ONE!!! He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch with his feelings and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned.

He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor.

He was glad he did. The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her; no one stopping and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket.

When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?" She nodded through her tears. He continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly."

As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister..." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?" He stopped in mid-stride ... and he wondered. He gently went back and said, "No, I am nothing like Jesus - He is good, kind, caring, loving, and would never have bumped into your display in the first place."

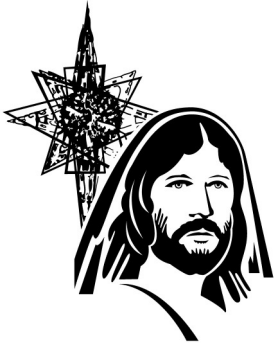
The girl gently nodded: "I only asked because I prayed for Jesus to help me gather the apples. He sent you to help me, so you are like Him - only He knows who will do His will. Thank you for hearing His call, Mister."

Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"

Do people mistake you for Jesus? That's our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace.

If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting Scripture and going to church. It's actually living the Word as life unfolds day to day.

You are the apple of His eye even though you, too, have been bruised by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked up you and me on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our damaged fruit.





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 9

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.*



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, teachers, 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 or to Bible Class (which we will be starting this new year). Bring them to a house of worship increases the potential for them to see the Light of God's love 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 joy 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 did, 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 tired we get, no matter how long it takes. 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 are 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 gives us many 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 to us of what it 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 possessions in response to what Christ has done for us by coming to earth. What “treasures” can you give to your Savior today?



Storms date back to biblical times

My grandchildren Joshua and Jessica and I have been talking about the weather a lot lately (during the summer). They both have been studying the weather in school and are very interested in the violent tornadoes, hailstorms and snowstorms that have plagued the world.

They seem to think that the storms have been happening for only a short time. I reminded them that we have only had a storm tracking system for a couple of hundred years and that there have been storms ever since God made the world. It is only in recent years that we have telecommunication systems that allow us to see storms as they are happening all over the world.

I also told the grandchildren about the pioneers in the Midwest who were traveling in covered wagons, and they would endure great whirlwinds and storms. They would crouch under their wagons and observe the cattle being lifted into the air and flying above them and often times they would lose everything they had in their wagons. The rain would drench them for days and snowstorms would arrive unexpectedly, and there would be no food except the dried fruit or meat they have saved from the last harvest.

Weather has always been the greatest battle of our survival, yet God has blessed us to know that He will sustain us to all times.

The recent hailstorm which damaged so much property in our area and later high winds, which uprooted so many trees was an example to them of the almighty power of God. I told them that storms of this kind were recorded in the Bible.

In the book of Joshua we are told that hailstorms killed more of the Israelites enemies that were killed in battle and God let the moon stay up and the sun stand still for days until the Good Guys were victorious.

In the book of Nahum, I reminded them that the Lord has His way in the whirlwinds (tornadoes) and the storms and the clouds. It also tells us in the book of Joshua that God talks out of whirlwinds about snow, hail, lightning and thunderstorms.

There has always been an abundance of storms to read about the Bible. They are things that man has no control over and all the scientific evidence and knowledge cannot keep the heavens from unleashing at any time.

I have to laugh sometimes when I think of circumstances that I find myself in. I live right in a very busy part of Gaston on Franklin Boulevard, but one of the things that happens to our section is that we lose power every time a major storm sweeps our part of town. Our entire block is not affected as I can stand on my porch and look down to the next blocks and see light on either side, but across the street and on our side, there will be no light.

The other night this lasted for several hours and I understand that there are several sections of Gastonia where the power was off for several days. The last storm put us in the dark and there I stood in my nightgown with a flashlight in one hand and candles all around my living room. There was enough light for me to clearly see the refrigerator and the snack food and so I sat and snacked and contemplated in the darkness just how hot the house was getting without the air conditioner. How pampered we are in a land of so many blessings.

In the days of Jesus, He was able to calm storms and bring peace and His followers observed for days that there was no sun or stars in Acts 27. Although we cannot make the storms vanish, we can trust in the one who controls in all. I remind my precious grandchildren to read more about the Creator and Sustainer in the Bible because as much as I want them to be safe and secure, I cannot keep them from the storms of life.

Hats off to all of you storm survivors.

(The author is Gastonia resident Helen Almond Turner (initials H.A.T.) is an inspirational speaker and writer known as the "Hat Lady" has more than 900 hats in her collection.

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High Fructose Consumption, Higher Diabetes

United Press International, 12/03/2012

Large amounts of high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) may be none of the factors for the global epidemic of type 2 diabetes, U.S. and British researchers suggest. The study, published in Global Public Health, found countries with higher use of HFCS had an average prevalence of type 2 diabetes of 8 percent compared to 6.7 percent in countries not using HFCS.

"HFCS appears to pose a serious public health problem on a global scale," principal study author Michael Goran, director of the Childhood Obesity Research Center and co-director of the Diabetes and Obesity Research Institute at the Keck School of Medicine at University of Southern California, said in a statement. "The study adds to a growing body of scientific literature that indicates HFCS consumption may result in negative health consequences distinct from and more deleterious than natural sugar."

Goran and Stanley Ulijaazek of the University of Oxford said of the 42 countries studied, the United States had the highest per-capita consumption of HFCS at a rate of 55 pounds per year. The second highest was Hungary, with annual rate of 47 pounds per capita, Canada, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Belgium, Argentina, South Korea, Japan and Mexico are also relatively high HFCS consumers. However, Germany, Poland, Greece, Portugal, Egypt, Finland and Serbia were among the lowest HFCS consumers.

Countries with per-capita consumption of less than 1 pound per year included: Australia, China, Denmark, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Uruguay.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

JANUARY 18–25, 2023

Do Good; Seek Justice.*(cf. Isaiah 1:17)***Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2023 Theme Announced**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25) has been observed for more than 100 years, during which Christians around the world have prayed for visible Christian unity, striving to move toward the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper "that they all may be one" (John 17:21).

The theme is from Isaiah 1:17, "Do good; seek justice." The entire scriptural passage for the theme is Isaiah 1:12-18, lamenting a lack of justice among the People of God. Yet, it also promises redemption by encouraging acts of justice.

The 2023 theme was developed with the assistance of a group of Christians in Minnesota, USA, convened by the Minnesota Council of Churches. Minneapolis, MN became a flashpoint for calls for racial justice and equity during the responses of communities to the George Floyd murder. This received world-wide attention.

In its *Introduction to the Theme*, the organizers write: "Today, separation and oppression continue to be manifest when any single group or class is given privileges above others. The sin of racism is evident in any beliefs or practices that distinguish or elevate one "race" over another. When accompanied or sustained by imbalances in power, racial prejudice moves beyond individual relationships to the very structures of society – the systemic perpetuation of racism. Its existence has unfairly benefited some, including churches, and burdened and excluded others, simply due to the color of their skin and the cultural associations based upon perceptions of 'race'."

Isaiah challenged God's people in his day to learn to do good together, to seek justice together, to rescue the oppressed together, to defend the orphan and plead for the widow together. The prophet's challenge applies equally to us today.

Calling to mind our common Christian commitment to justice and mercy, we pray that the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25, 2023 will be full of moments of conversion of heart through our ecumenical encounters, so that "all may be one."

The North Texas Conference of the UMC will host an Ecumenical Worship Service at 7 p.m. on Jan. 19 at Custer Road UMC, 6601 Custer Road, Plano, TX 75023. The NTC will gather with its Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Catholic siblings to worship God together.

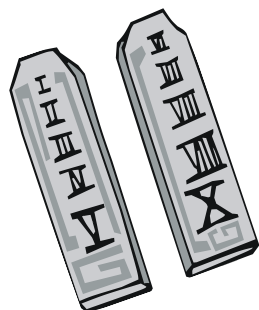
**DO GOOD; SEEK JUSTICE.***(Isaiah 1:17)***WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2023**



Our Saviour Lutheran Church
P.O. Box 457
725 Gastonia Technology Parkway
Dallas, NC 28034



JANUARY 2023



10 COMMANDMENTS
God's elect were told to write God's laws on their doorposts, to teach them to their children and to internalize them in their hearts and minds. That can be done no matter what the courts say.