**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**January 2016**

**Epiphany and New Beginnings**

*Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? –Isaiah 43:19a ESV*

Since I have been among you, it has been my tradition to begin each worship service with a different, important Bible verse. I have come to believe that beginning worship with something from God’s Word sets the tone in the right way for what we are doing. Worship is not a social gathering, as important as those are. We are gathered to hear God’s Word for us, to be fed and sustained by the good news of Jesus Christ, and to respond in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, which then needs to spill over into our everyday lives.

I have also come to believe that the same principle holds true for life as a whole. When we begin a New Year with God’s Word in front of us, God is speaking to us, setting us in a right relationship with him through faith in Jesus Christ, and then calling us to follow Him in the paths that he desires us to walk. And so the verse that I use to begin this New Year is listed above: Isaiah 43:19a.

Christians have often understood this verse to refer to the new thing that God was going to do by sending his Son Jesus Christ to be among us, but this message of God doing a new thing really summarizes the whole content of Bible. From the very beginning, God is involved in bringing light from darkness, leading people from slavery into freedom, and bringing life from death. This pattern reaches its climax with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

On January 6, Christians observe the festival of Epiphany, the message of Jesus Christ being revealed and going out to the whole world. We hear the story of the wise men (magi) being led by a star to see the child (toddler, as their journey would likely have taken a year or more). We certainly do not have a star to guide us into whatever new opportunities are placed before us. But we do have God’s Word of promise for us in Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

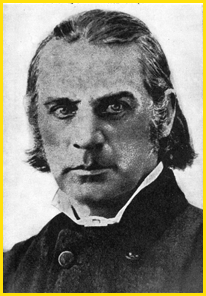
As this New Year begins, my hope is that all of us will reflect on the ways that God is active in our lives right now. Of course, we believe that God is primarily active each and every day by killing the sin within us and raising us to new life in Christ through his word of forgiveness. But what are the new things that God has blessed you with recently? What are the new things that God is leading you to do in the coming year? This New Year might not bring about drastic changes in our lives, but a New Year is always an opportunity to look back, reflect on our lives, and see the directions that God might be prodding us toward. What do we need to repent of, and how is God calling us to change? In a world that often tells us to “Follow your heart,” the message of Epiphany is rather that we are called to follow the light of God’s Word. Whatever God might be calling us to do specifically, more generally we are all called, like those wise men from Matthew chapter two, to kneel and worship Christ, not only to bring our gifts before him, but most importantly to receive the heavenly gift of redemption that only he can bring us.

As I told the confirmation class recently, the abbreviation “AD” after a year does not mean “after death” as is commonly thought. Rather, “AD” is an abbreviation of two Latin words *anno domini*, which means “in the year of the Lord.” As the year 2016 AD begins, think about what a bold statement it is to declare that this is, just like years past, the year of the Lord.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

As you probably know, Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present. We should never assume that we cannot learn something from them. So, each month, I will highlight the life and witness of a significant Christian person from the past.



For January of 2016, the person is Johann Konrad Wilhelm Löhe (sometimes spelled “Loehe”). He is commemorated on the day of his death (January 2), which also happens to be my birthday. Hence, I have a special appreciation for him!

Löhe was born at Fuerth, Germany, in 1808. When he was eight years old, his father died. Young Löhe studied in Erlangen, there discovering the Lutheran Confessions. In 1837, he became pastor in a small village, Neuendettelsau. His efforts at getting a city parish were unavailing, and he remained there the rest of his life. He was a model parish pastor. He founded the Neuendettelsau Foreign Mission Society, sending pastors to North America, Australia, and Brazil. His “emissaries” in North America assisted in founding the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as well as the Iowa Synod, both of which were Midwestern-based German Lutheran denominations. He fought for a clear confessional basis for the Bavarian church and was sometimes in conflict with the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. He founded the Society for Inner Missions and established a deaconess motherhouse at Neuendettelsau that had widespread influence. A student of the liturgy and its practical application in the life of his people, he saw Holy Communion as the center of congregational life. Though he never left Germany himself, his influence in the area of world missions and worship life is still felt today.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Featured Hymn for January**

***As with Gladness Men of Old***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 128*

1. As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold; As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright; So, most gracious Lord, may we, evermore be led by thee.
2. As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to thy lowly bed, there to bend the knee before Thee, whom heaven and earth adore; So may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.
3. As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle rude and bare, so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy, all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heavenly king.
4. Holy Jesus, every day, keep us in the narrow way; And when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glory hide.
5. In the heavenly country bright need they no created light; thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down; there forever may we sing Alleluias to our King.

* William C. Dix, 1837-1898

*Note: Dix wrote this hymn during Epiphany of 1858 after he had read the Gospel for the day when he was ill. It was first included in his* Hymns of Love and Joy *in 1861.*

**Monthly Watchword for January**

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” – 2 Timothy 1:7

**What is a “Watchword”?**

The Moravian Church (a close cousin to Lutherans) began the practice in 1731 of selecting daily texts (Bible verses) for prayer and reflection, which continues to this day. Many Christians around the world use these Daily Texts as a part of their prayer life. They are included each year in a book available from Mount Carmel Ministries near Alexandria, Minnesota.

In addition to this, they began to select a theme verse for each week, called a “watchword.” You will notice in the bulletins for worship on Sunday mornings that I include that watchword for each week and begin worship by speaking that verse out loud, setting the tone for worship with that word from God.

The Moravian Church also selects theme verses for each month as well as for each year. Lutherans and other Christians in Germany are much more familiar with using these “watchwords,” and I am glad to have learned of them from my time spent there. For your own reflection, I will include the monthly watchword in the newsletter each month.

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Apostles’ Creed: The Second Article**

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

*What does this mean?*

*I believe that Jesus Christ – true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary – is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, and has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I might be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns for all eternity. This is most certainly true.*

**Ushers and Cleaners for January**

**Head Usher and Head Cleaner: Ushers: Cleaners:**

Travis Kauth Loren Yule Jane Yule

Shauna Kauth Ralph Jessen Theresa Jessen

Jim Sage Marilyn Sage

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC**

Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lindy is now a member of two Lutheran organizations: Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (the NALC). If you are interested in learning more about these groups, you can visit their websites. For LCMC, www.lcmc.net. For the NALC, www.thenalc.org. Additionally, you can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses: http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters and http://thenalc.org/newsletter/

**Bible Study:**

For those available on Wednesday mornings, please feel free to join Pr. Tom for Bible study! Typically we will hold Bible study every other Wednesday, usually the second and the fourth Wednesdays of the month. We will gather between 10:45 and 11:00 and then proceed until about noon.

**Website**

Good Shepherd now has a website! It is basic at this point, but additional things will be added to it eventually. There are already some photos that have been uploaded. The web address is as follows: www.gselclindy.weebly.com

**Scripture Readings and Watchwords for Sundays in January**

**Second Sunday after Christmas (Epiphany of Our Lord, Observed) (January 3):** “God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ.” – Ephesians 1:9 NRSV

*Isaiah 60:1-6*

*Psalm 72:1-11*

*Ephesians 3:1-12*

*Matthew 2:1-12*

**The Baptism of Our Lord (January 10):** “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” – Isaiah 43:1 NRSV

*Isaiah 43:1-7*

*Psalm 29*

*Romans 6:1-11*

*Luke 3:15-17, 21-22*

**Second Sunday after the Epiphany (January 17):** “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord.” – 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 NRSV

*Isaiah 62:1-5*

*Psalm 128*

*1 Corinthians 12:1-11*

*John 2:1-11*

**Third Sunday after the Epiphany (January 24):** “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” – Psalm 19:14 NRSV

*Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10*

*Psalm 19:7-14*

*1 Corinthians 12:12-31a*

*Luke 4:16-30*

**Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (January 31):** “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.” – 1 Corinthians 13:12 NRSV

*Jeremiah 1:4-10*

*Psalm 71:1-6*

*1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13*

*Luke 4:31-44*

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

*I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. –Psalm 16:8*

Merry Christmas! Now that we’re in the month of January, this greeting may sound outdated. If you ask most people, they will tell you that the season of Christmas spans from the day after Thanksgiving all the way to December 25. The Christmas music that used to be blaring from radios and loudspeakers during this time magically disappears on December 26.

I have no problem with hearing Christmas music during the month of December. In fact, I would come to miss such “holiday favorites” were they absent from that time of year. But what we need to realize is that, technically, the season of Christmas in the church doesn’t begin until the evening of December 24 and goes all the way to January 5, with the holiday known as Epiphany on the next day, January 6: the message of Jesus being taken to people outside of the Jewish community, as shown by the foreign wise men (magi) coming to worship Jesus. December 25 to January 5: these are the “12 days of Christmas” that are sung about so often.

Christmas is something that we carry with us into the New Year, into the month of January. But more than that, Christmas is something we carry with us throughout the whole year. Christmas is more than just bland sentimentality; Christmas is an integral part of our faith, on which hangs everything else. During Christmas, we hear the great and grand promise that God has entered into the life of our world in a very physical, concrete way. The eternal Son of God is born as a human being named Jesus (meaning “he saves”), setting the stage for everything else: his life, teachings, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. If you take Christmas out of the mix (his birth), the rest of Jesus’ life doesn’t mean a whole lot. If Jesus is not the eternal Word of God made flesh, he can’t do a whole lot to redeem sinners.

Christmas is a part of our faith throughout the whole year, just as we say throughout the whole year in the words of the Nicene Creed: “For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and was made man.”

Christmas is one of the foundations on which is built the grand structure of our faith, and although we may not sing “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” in the middle of the summer, we dare not throw Christmas out of our memories during that time. If we do, we chuck out the rest of our faith as well. Remembering the birth of Jesus as the beginning of the grand story of our faith is one of the ways that we live out the words of the Psalmist: “I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” – Psalm 16:8

Merry Christmas!

* Pr. Tom Jacobson

**Annual Meeting**

A reminder: The annual meeting of the congregation will be after worship on Sunday, January 17. The installation of congregational officers will take place during worship that morning.

**January 2016**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  | **1** | **2** |
| **3**  **Sunday School, 9:30 AM**  **Worship 10:30 AM**  **Holy Communion**  **Color: White** | **4** | **5** | **6**  **Confirmation class, 5:00 PM** | **7** | **8** | **9** |
| **10**  **Sunday School, 9:30 AM**  **Worship, 10:30 AM**  **Color: White** | **11** | **12** | **13**  **Bible study, 10:45 AM**  **Confirmation class, 5:00 PM**  **Church council, 7:00 PM** | **14** | **15** | **16** |
| **17**  **Sunday School, 9:30 AM**  **Worship 10:30 AM**  **Holy Communion**  **Annual meeting after worship**  **Color: Green** | **18** | **19** | **20**  **Ladies meeting, 10:00 AM**  **Confirmation class, 5:00 PM** | **21** | **22** | **23** |
| **24**  **Sunday School, 9:30 AM**  **Worship, 10:30 AM**  **Color: Green** | **25** | **26** | **27 28 29 30**  **Bible Study,**  **10:45 AM**  **Confirmation**  **Class, 5:00** | | | |
| **31**  **Sunday School, 9:30; Worship, 10:30: Color: Green** |  |  |  | | | |

Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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