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

***Lindy, Nebraska***

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**The Rod and Staff**



**January and February 2021**

**Keeping My Eyes on You, Lord**

***The star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.***

* **Matthew 2:9 ESV**

You might have heard about the so-called “Christmas star” that appeared in the sky in the days just before Christmas of 2020 A.D. Maybe you had a chance to see it. Unfortunately, it was cloudy that night over our home in Menno, South Dakota, so I didn’t get a chance to see this rare astronomical phenomenon. From what I have been told, it was a sight to see, a rare bright spot in an otherwise dark year filled with disruption, confusion, illness, and death.

This “star” was created by the overlapping of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the sky, creating an incredibly bright burst of light. Some people believe that it was essentially the same phenomenon that created the star referred to in the Bible. Written about two thousand years ago, the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible talks about a star that led a group of wise men (magi) from the east to see the child Jesus and bring him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Whether or not the star mentioned in Matthew chapter 2 was the result of the convergence of planets is something that no one can say for certain. What Matthew tells us is that the star led these wise men (it does not say how many of them there were, only that there was more than one) to the child Jesus. They recognized him as a special king and brought him gifts that symbolized who Jesus was destined to become.

I mentioned in my Christmas Eve sermon that this story of the wise men from Matthew chapter 2 is a separate story from what we hear in Luke chapter 2 about the angels and shepherds. Matthew and Luke share different details about Jesus’ coming into the world. Some people claim that their accounts of Jesus’ birth and early childhood conflict with each other, but I do not believe that to be true. They share different details, and if you work it out, you can fit them together.

Nevertheless, the story of the wise men apparently is set at a somewhat later time than the events of the first Christmas. In our manger scenes at Christmastime, we often conflate these stories together, but they are separate stories. There would not have been shepherds and wise men together on the first Christmas. The wise men are described as seeing the “child” with his mother and entering a house. The word “child” is different than a newborn infant, indicating that Jesus was somewhat older by that point.

For this reason, the star referred to in Matthew chapter 2 that led the wise men to Jesus is not really a Christmas star. It is better called an “Epiphany star.” Traditionally, we view the story of the visit of the wise men to be a part of what we call “Epiphany.” On January 6, we observe a holiday called “Epiphany,” which has to do with the message of Jesus going out to the whole world. Epiphany is the fulfillment of Christmas. At Christmas, we hear the angel bring the shepherds “good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” This includes foreign wise men from the east. It includes people near and far. It includes people like us.

It is important that we keep the stories of Christmas and Epiphany separate, for they both communicate important truths about our faith. The story of Christmas, the Word made flesh, is a vital part of our faith. God is among us! God is with us! This is the good news of Emmanuel! But by itself, the message has no power. Epiphany is the message that the good news of Jesus in the manger is meant to be shared, proclaimed, and believed. Not only was Christ born; He dwells among us by faith. As we move into a new year, the good news is meant to be carried with us, long after we put the Christmas decorations and manger scenes away. The Epiphany star still shines as God’s Word of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. All throughout the year, we are called to keep our eyes fixed on that star that leads us to the source of our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Commemoration of the Saints**

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. They form a “great cloud of witnesses” as we remain pilgrims and strangers on earth (Hebrews 12:1).

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For January and February of 2021, we remember the life of **Kaj Munk**, Danish Lutheran pastor, patriot, and playwright (his first name rhymes with “high”). He is commemorated on January 5.

Kaj Munk was born in 1898 and orphaned at the age of six. He was ordained in 1924 and became pastor at Vederso, a small parish in Denmark. He wrote widely about the eventual victory of the Christian faith, which spoke to the people at a time when the German Nazis had occupied their country. Feared by the Nazis because his writings helped strengthen the Danish resistance movement, Munk was arrested on January 4, 1944. The next day, his body was found in a ditch. His martyrdom increased the determination of the resistance movement to the Nazis in Denmark. Several thousand Danes attended his funeral.

A prayer by Kaj Munk: *O Holy Spirit, wipe the tears away from my eyes so that I can see the Savior, see Him so clearly that I can speak of Him to my people in these fateful times. Do your great work in our hearts in this degraded age so that Jesus may be a light to us. Then nothing can subdue us, and our eyes are blessed. With the spring of joy bubbling from the heart, each one in the church and those among our people who have eyes with which to see shall learn of the calm and noble Jesus, where to say no and where to say yes, and how we are to live our lives and do our work so that it may help our neighbor and our country. Amen.*

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

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

**The Ten Commandments**

***The Second Commandment***

*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold guiltless those who take his name in vain.*

***What does this mean?***

*We should fear and love God so that we do not use his name superstitiously or to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, but call upon him in every time of need and worship him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.*

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*“Now, what is the “star?” It is nothing else than the new light, the oral and public preaching of the Gospel. Christ has two witnesses of his birth and kingdom; the one is the Scripture, the written Word; the other is the voice of the word preached orally.”*

**Martin Luther on Matthew 2:1-12**

**Sermon on Epiphany, 1522 A.D.**

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**Adopt a Calf!**

As many members of the congregation know, the Calf Project has been a valuable part of the life of Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church of Lindy over the years.

The church council recognizes that because of changing circumstances, not everyone who would like to contribute to the Calf Project in the traditional way is able to do so.

For that reason, we would like to open up participation in the Calf Project to anyone. We will continue to operate the Calf Project in the traditional way through donations of calves, but anyone is welcome to “adopt a calf.” The way to do so is simply by committing to make a donation to the Calf Project in any amount and according to your own schedule. You can make an annual contribution to the Calf Project, or you can space out your contributions monthly or however works best for you.

Please consider “adopting a calf” as a way to ensure the continuation of the Calf Project into the future!

**Featured Hymn for January and February**

***Bright and Glorious Is the Sky***

***Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 131***

1. *Bright and glorious is the sky, radiant are the heavens high, where the golden stars are shining. All their rays to earth inclining beckon us to heaven above, beckon us to heaven above.*
2. *On that holy Christmas night through the darkness beamed a light; All the stars above were palling, all their luster slowly failing as the Christmas star drew nigh, as the Christmas star drew nigh.*
3. *Sages from the East afar, when they saw this wondrous star, went to find the king of nations and to offer their oblations unto him as Lord and King, unto him as Lord and king.*
4. *Him they found in Bethlehem, yet he wore no diadem; they but saw a maiden lowly with an infant pure and holy resting in her loving arms, resting in her loving arms.*

* Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1783-1872; translated, Jens Christian Aaberg

*Note: Grundtvig wrote this Christmas/Epiphany hymn in 1810 between two episodes of mental distress. It is one of his first hymns and most beloved.*

**Monthly Watchword for February**

“Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

* Luke 10:20 ESV

**Ushers for January and February:**

* Head Ushers (January):
  + Scott and Christine Eisenhauer
* Ushers:
  + Loren and Jane Yule
  + Ralph and Theresa Jessen
  + Jim Sage
  + Mike and Danielle Sage
  + Jerome and Venita Sage
  + Mariah Sage
  + Elliot Olson
* Head Ushers (February)
  + Beth and Jeff Barger
* Ushers:
  + Galen and Jamie Guenther
  + Scott and Paula Veldhouse
  + Don and Bonnie Paulsen
  + Jamie Doerr
  + Patience Teboe
  + Lacey Barger

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Martin Luther’s Morning Prayer**

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask you to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that in all I do today I may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let you holy angel watch over me, that the wicked foe have no power over me. Amen.

**Birthdays for January and February**

*Note: This list of birthdays is a work in progress, as we are currently trying to gather membership information from the old congregational record into an electronic form. If your name is not listed in the appropriate month, please let pastor know your birthday so that it can be added in the future. If you would not like your name to be listed, simply let pastor know. The birthdays are provided here as a way of giving thanks for the lives of members of the congregation. Happy birthday to all!*

* January 2: Pr. Tom Jacobson
* January 5: Jamie Guenther
* January 6: Jerry Ziegler
* January 10: Jeff Hanson
* January 13: Reed Eckmann
* January 19: Michael Beckmann
* January 21: Cassandra Barger
* February 2: Ernest Eckmann
* February 5: Cecilia Eckmann
* February 7: Beth Barger
* February 14: Don Paulsen
* February 18: Chris Braunsroth
* February 19: Stella Branstiter
* February 20: Gene Eckmann
* February 23: Larry Barnes

**Baptismal Anniversaries for January and February**

*Note: Just as it is important to acknowledge the beginning of our earthly lives with our birthdays, it is even more important for us as Christians to remember the day when God has given us a new birthday, a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Lutherans confess that baptism is the means by which God gives us as a part of sinful humanity a new relationship with him, a promise that our faith can look to all our lives. In turn, we are called to a life of repentance and faith that trusts in Christ as our salvation. As with the birthdays, this list is a work in progress. Blessed baptismal anniversaries to everyone!*

* January 4: Margo Poppe
* January 8: Vicky Jensen
* January 14: Ernest Eckmann
* January 23: Jamie Guenther
* January 25: Edward Sage
* February 8: Tyler Guenther
* February 9: Tatum Olson
* February 10: Callie Olson

**Weekly Watchwords**

Note: These “watchwords” for each week can be considered “theme verses” on which to reflect for the week.

**Second Sunday of Christmas (1/3/21):** *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* – John 1:14 ESV

**The Baptism of our Lord (1/10/21):** *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* – Romans 8:14 ESV

**Second Sunday after Epiphany (1/17/21):** *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* – John 1:17 ESV

**Third Sunday after Epiphany (1/24/21):** *And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.* – Luke 13:29 ESV

**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (1/31/21):** *Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.* – Psalm 66:5 ESV

**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (2/7/21):** *[The Lord] will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.* – 1 Corinthians 4:5 ESV

**The Transfiguration of our Lord (2/14/21):** *[T]he Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.* – Isaiah 60:2 ESV

**First Sunday in Lent (2/21/21):** *For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.* – Daniel 9:18 ESV

**Second Sunday in Lent (2/28/21):** *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.* – Hebrews 3:15 ESV

**Shepherd’s Garden**

The Shepherd’s Garden began a number of years ago and has been supported by the dedication of many church members in that time. Though the garden has been cleaned up for the winter, we include this reminder that the Shepherd’s Garden, located behind the church building, is available in the spring, summer, and autumn for anyone, church member or not, desiring a quiet place for prayer and reflection. In the Bible, gardens appear at significant points. It is our hope that the Shepherd’s Garden can be of service to our world in encouraging people to pray and listen to God.

**Important Announcements**

* We will continue having a time of coffee and fellowship before worship each Sunday, beginning at 9:30.
* We continue to meet for in-person worship at the church at the usual time of 10:30. We have been taking and will continue to practice the following precautions in light of COVID-19:
  + Hand sanitizer is available at the entrance to the sanctuary.
  + Bulletins are placed in every other pew in order to encourage some distance in seating.
  + Masks are available to wear if you prefer.
  + We will not engage in any greeting time after worship.
  + For the distribution of Holy Communion, we will do so at the altar rail, with family units invited to come forward on either side. Pastor will use hand sanitizer before the distribution and will drop the bread in open hands. Wine cups are spaced apart in the trays for you to take as Pastor comes by with the tray. Pastor will also wear a mask during the distribution.
* Pr. Tom has begun the practice of recording short devotions of around fifteen minutes each, usually every other week. These recorded devotions involve a time of morning, evening, or afternoon prayer, a Bible reading and brief comment on it, as well as a hymn. These devotions may be accessed on the church Facebook page as well as on the church website: gselclindy.weebly.com
* Confirmation class will resume on January 6; we will continue learning about the Lord’s Prayer.
* The winter annual meeting will be on Sunday January 17 after worship, though because of COVID, we will not have the usual potluck lunch afterwards. We will have installation of church council members that Sunday during worship.
* Please get any reports for the annual report to Beth Barger by January 10, by email if possible: bargers@gpcom.net
* Please take note of the announcement in this newsletter regarding “Adopt a Calf.”
* The season of Lent begins on February 17 with Ash Wednesday. As in years past, we will have Lenten evening worship at 7:00 on those evenings.
* Confirmation class will not be held during the season of Lent. Instead, students are encouraged to attend the Lenten evening worship time that is offered; they may use those opportunities to complete worship notes.
* The church council has not yet decided whether to have the Lenten suppers preceding Lenten evening worship. We will keep everyone posted.
* As we began at the beginning of the school year, we will continue using a different set of Bible readings (lectionary) on Sunday mornings. This “Narrative Lectionary” includes a single main preaching text along with an accompanying reading. It is an opportunity to become more familiar with the Holy Scriptures, hearing the stories of the Bible in chronological order, beginning with the book of Genesis. We have now moved on to the New Testament.

**An Epiphany Message on Matthew 2:1-12**

*Note: I shared a version of this message a few years ago; it was intended to be read by the youth on the Sunday after Christmas in 2017, but worship was cancelled because of the cold weather.*

In our part of the world, when most people think of “Christmas,” they think of the time between Thanksgiving Day toward the end of November all the way to December 25. Radio stations will play Christmas music during this time, but even Christian radio stations will stop playing Christmas music on the evening of December 25 and go back to their usual routine. The time between Thanksgiving Day and December 25 is a time of intense marketing by retailers, with many stores making a large percentage of their profit for the year in the weeks before Christmas Day. So, it’s no wonder that many people think of Christmas as over and done with after dinner on December 25.

In many of our homes, Christmas trees and Christmas lights are already being taken down. And so, it surprises people to learn that the twelve days of Christmas that we sing about as children actually *start* on December 25 and go to January 5. Those twelve days of Christmas do *not* lead up to December 25. It is on January 6, the Day of Epiphany, that we hear a story about wise men, Magi, from the East. And these wise men, led by a star, travel from afar to visit the child named Jesus, and they bring him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And old tradition says that these wise men were three in number, and that’s understandable based on the number of the gifts that they bring. But it never actually says how many of these wise men there were. There could have been hundreds of them for all we know. But as we think about journey of these wise men, it’s a reminder to us that the message of Christmas is not something we should just forget about after dinner on December 25.

In the nativity scenes that we see in front of churches and houses this time of year, we see these wise men together with shepherds on the night that Jesus was born. But if we read the story from the Gospel of Matthew carefully, we see that these wise men would not have come to visit Jesus on the night that he was born. In fact, these wise men probably didn’t find Jesus until he was at least a year old. In Matthew chapter two verse ten, the Greek word that is translated as “child” does not mean a newborn infant. It means a child of toddler age. These wise men were occupied for a long time with finding Jesus. It wasn’t as though they just dropped by that one night and went on their way. Their search for Jesus became their life, for they knew that the child that had been born was special.

When we hear the story of these wise men, we sometimes focus on the gifts that they bring to the child Jesus. But the main point of the story is not that these wise men bring gifts. The main point is that Jesus himself is the gift, the greatest gift that God can give, to the world. And when those wise men realized this, it changed their lives forever. The story of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, is something we take with us through the whole year, not just in the weeks leading up to December 25 and not even just in the actual twelve days of Christmas. Through the gift of Jesus Christ, God begins a new relationship with us and the world, and God calls us to live in that relationship, always receiving Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and redemption he provides. As Jesus Christ was born and lived among us, it is as if a rose was planted among the weeds and sin of the world, and we are called to adore and trust in that rose that God planted among us. Hans Brorson, the Danish Lutheran hymn writer, wrote the following Christmas hymn, which we can imagine those wise men singing so long ago upon finding the child Jesus:

1. I've found now the fairest of roses. In briars and thorns it reposes. My Jesus, a branch newly showing. A rose among sinners is growing.
2. O sinners in brambles and briars, Corrupted by your stubborn errors, Why are you so proud in your spirit, And trust in your own feeble merit?
3. O come seek the places most lowly, And weep before Jesus the Holy. Receive all the gifts that he offers, This Rose planted here among briars.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**January 2021**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
| 3  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Second Sunday of Christmas  White | 4 | 5 | 6  The Epiphany of our Lord  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  The Baptism of our Lord  White | 11 | 12 | 13  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45  Church council, 7:00 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Annual meeting after worship  Green | 18 | 19 | 20  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00  Confirmation class, 5:15-6:45 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  Green | 25 | 26 | 27 28 29 30  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | | | |
| 31  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  Green |  |  |  | | | |

**February 2021**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3    Pr. Tom in Lindy    Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  Green | 8 | 9 | 10  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:15-6:45  Church council meeting, 7:00 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  The Transfiguration of our Lord  White | 15 | 16 | 17  Ash Wednesday  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00  Ash Wednesday worship, 7:00 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21  Coffee and fellowship, 9:30  Worship with Holy Communion, 10:30  First Sunday in Lent  Purple | 22 | 23 | 24  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Lenten supper, 6:00 ?  Lenten evening worship, 7:00 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28  Worship, Service of the Word, 10:30  White |  |  |  | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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