



Saint Luke Lutheran Church

1807 Field Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55116 | 651-698-9443 | saintlukechurch.org

January 2024 Newsletter



The Pastor's Perspective

What to bring a baby king?

Reflections on the Wise Men

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." They set out [for Bethlehem]; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11)



January Worship Volunteers

Thanks for your participation!

IN PERSON USHERS

First and Second Sundays:

Volker Landenberger

Third and Fourth Sundays:

Mike and Nancy Hegdahl

ONLINE USHERS

1st Sunday: David Tews

2nd Sunday: Sue McNeill

3rd Sunday: Raulie Ruiz

4th Sunday: David NedreLOW

OFFERING COUNTERS

7 Katy Eggert

14 Carol Hornung

21 Joyce Bluel

28 Kay Reich

READERS

7 Christine Olson

14 Julie Ellingson

21 Wendy Bjorklund

28 Kay Reich

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

7 Christine Olson

14 Doug Klein

21 Wendy Bjorklund

28 Kay Reich

ALTAR GUILD

Joyce Bluel

At the beginning of January, we celebrate the festival of Epiphany. Epiphany closes out the Christmas season with a commemoration of the wise men's arrival in Bethlehem.

Matthew's account is the only telling we have of these mysterious visitors, so many questions go unanswered. How many wise men were there? (Tradition says three, but Matthew doesn't specify.) Where did they come from, and how far had they traveled? (The "East" is pretty vague.) How did they know this unusual star signified the birth of the new king? (Perhaps they'd been waiting their whole careers for such a star!)

One thing is clear: they certainly brought the wrong gifts. They went to Jerusalem first because it was the holy city, the home of the Temple, the center of Jewish life in first-century Israel. The local ruler, Herod, had a palace there, and a palace is a reasonable place to start looking for a new king.

But they learned that the baby had actually been born in Bethlehem, a little village on the outskirts, nowhere important. And when they got there, they realized the baby didn't even have an official place to stay, let alone a palace. Here they'd brought him these gifts fit for a royal, embalming oils and a measure of gold. What use would these be to little Jesus when his family fled to Egypt as refugees to escape Herod's threats?

Although the text actually isn't clear on that point either. Matthew says the wise men opened their treasure chests and *offered* gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Holy Family. He doesn't specify whether or not they took them. Perhaps Mary and Joseph politely said, "Our donkey is already overloaded, and we're trying to travel light. But thanks for the thought!"

All joking aside, the wise men play an important role in the nativity story because they bring the one gift that is most appropriate of all: JOY! Matthew tells us that once they finally found Jesus, the wise men were overwhelmed with joy. They were not Jewish. They did not share culture or religion with Mary, Joseph, and their new baby. And yet, they knew that Jesus would be a king for them, too. Their homage of Jesus foreshadowed his generous and inclusive grace that would be for *all* people.

And their reaction was the right one. Even if they'd misunderstood the kind of king Jesus will be, they did understand that the response to this moment of the incarnation should be joy. Salvation has come into the world! What a joy to witness it!

Blessed Epiphany to you all, and thanks be to God for the gift of Jesus, king of kings.

Art: Fortt, Annette Gandy. "Three More Kings," from **Art in the**



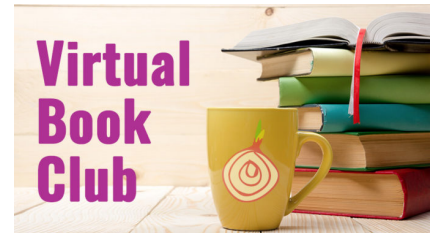
Bun Run

Many thanks to our Bun Run volunteers for January: Kay Reich, Julie Ellingson, Mike and Nancy Hegdahl, Volker Landengerger.

January Birthdays

9 Laurie Herrmann
16 Nancy Hegdahl
27 Kevin Arndt
29 Norma Alexander
30 Sue McNeill
31 Kim McNamara

All are invited to Game Day at St. Luke, the first and third Fridays of the month, January 5 and 19, at 12:30pm. Bring a snack to share and your favorite game and settle down to an afternoon of fun...join us!



Join us for St. Luke Book Club, Sunday Jan. 7, 6:30pm, via Zoom, to discuss "Big Little Lies", a mystery by Liane Moriarty. "A novel about secrets burrowed in a seemingly placid small town. Moriarty is a fantastically nimble writer, so sure-footed that the book leaps between dark and light seamlessly; even the big reveal in the final pages feels earned and genuinely shocking." The Zoom invite will be emailed to you shortly before the meeting. All are welcome!

Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. [Source here](#). [Retrieved December 19, 2023]. Original source: annettefortt.com.



Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas celebrations as we observed the birth of Jesus. The Christmas Eve service at St. Luke is always a special treat for me with the reading of the Christmas story from the book of Luke, the beautiful music performed by Becca and the choirs, and the lighting of the candles for the singing of “Silent Night.”

And like most people, I enjoyed gathering with family and friends for good times and good food on and around the holiday. The “12 days of Christmas” technically continue until Epiphany on Jan. 6, which gives us more time to savor the season and is a handy excuse for late-arriving cards and presents.

With the new year comes the installation of the 2024 church council on Sunday, Jan. 7. The 2024 council will look much like the 2023 council minus Kay Reich. (Thank you for your hard work, Kay.) Returning members are Vice President Volker Landenberger, Treasurer Joyce Bluel, Mike Hegdahl, Carol Hornung, and Doug Nelson. If you can join us on Jan. 7, stick around after the service if you can, to help take down the Christmas decorations.

During the month of January, we are collecting donations of socks and underwear to benefit the homeless and underprivileged. Donated clothing is collected and distributed by The Drawer, a charity founded by Stew and Debby Shepard. Jar donations in January will also be given to The Drawer, and you can also donate money on the online giving page of our website. The clothing drive culminates on Jan. 28—Undie Sunday—the last day to donate socks and underwear.

Speaking of jar donations, the council usually decides what charities to support with the money collected, but we’d love to hear suggestions from St. Luke members of other causes you think are worth supporting. If there’s a charity you think we should add to our list of recipients this year, talk to me, Pastor Bristol, or one of the other council members.

On a more practical note, Doug Klein had a discussion with an HVAC repair technician about the need to do periodic maintenance

Epiphany

The 12 days of Christmas conclude on Saturday, January 6, with Epiphany, when we celebrate God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Join us for a 6:00 pm service when we’ll read scripture about the divine light come into the world and bless our church building for a new year.

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who supported Lutheran Social Services’ Gifts for Homeless Youth Drive! It was very successful. Thanks to everyone who gave monetary gifts via the special offering jar during the month of December and to those who brought physical gifts and gift cards to the church. When I delivered the gifts and gift cards to my drop off site and opened the back “hatch” of my CRV, the teenaged man who helped me unload said, “Wow, that’s a lot!” It was! It was a blessing to me to deliver the bounty. We are a small congregation, but our giving is huge! Thank you so much for your generosity. I know it’s appreciated by those served by this program. Let’s hope we can do this again next year! Best, Wendy Bjorklund



Undie Sunday!

It is time for Undie Sunday!

It’s that time of the year again! The dropping temperatures make us think of those less fortunate who are experiencing homelessness, unemployment or underemployment. Providing the basic needs of socks and

on our heating system (i.e., replacing the motors on the fans). It isn't urgent, but the HVAC rep recommends replacing the motors as they age to avoid an unplanned outage that could require emergency service. St. Luke does have a "rainy day fund" to cover unexpected expenses, but keep in mind that we also have a "building fund" category for donations (including online donations) to help cover the cost of building maintenance when something like this comes up.

Welcome to 2024! I pray that this will be a good year for St. Luke and all of us in the St. Luke community.

Yours in Christ,
David Tews

***Connect,
Grow and Serve.***

underwear is our mission. The biggest need right now is mens and womens underwear in the L to XXL size range. On Jan. 7, Debby and Stew Shepard will be providing a Mission Message during worship to provide an update on the status and current needs of The Drawer. Financial donations can be made out to The Drawer or to St. Luke with The Drawer in the memo area. Also, we will be collecting donations in our offering jar for The Drawer. So, for the month of January, let's fill The Drawer! Collection Start: Jan. 7 – Undie Sunday: Jan. 28. More at www.thedrawer.org