



St. Luke Lutheran Church
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Open doors, open hearts, open minds.

Parish Times January 2017

For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.
 Romans 3:28



500 years ago, Martin Luther wrote the 95 theses and posted them on the Wittenberg Church door. His purpose was to begin a debate to reform some disturbing practices of the church. Little did he realize that it would be the beginning of a movement that shook the very foundations of the church and western world. During this 500- anniversary year, let's take time to study, ponder and meditate on the beauty of Luther's theology, which so changed the world. We will begin with a **dinner show on Friday, January 13 at 6:30 in which we will roll down the BIG screen in the social hall to watch the movie "Luther."** We will watch it while enjoying some good food...a pot luck. Throughout this year we will also be studying Luther's rich theology during adult forums as well as during Lent. For Lent I would like to suggest we each purchase a short book of meditations, **"40 Day Journey with Martin Luther," edited by Gracia M. Grindal**, a retired Luther Seminary professor. It sells for 12.99 plus tax on Amazon. You may sign up for a book and we can order them all at once, or you may just order your own copy. Also during our Lenten Wednesday evening worship services we will be examining the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and Holy Communion through the lens of Luther's Small Catechism. **If you wish to dive deeper into Luther's life, please read "Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther" by Roland Bainton.** It is a classic and very readable. Looking at the Amazon site, a couple of readers commented that the Abington Press version has extremely small print. You might want to purchase another version. We can take time for discussions about this fine book during this year. I believe you will be enriched.

Blessings of God's peace,
 Pr. Dave

January Acolytes
 1 (no acolyte)
 15 Evan Nelson

Loaves and Fishes
 67 hungry men women and children enjoyed a delicious meal served to them at the Loaves and Fishes Program at St Matthew's Catholic Church on November 28th. Workers from St. Luke were Pastor Dave Person, Larry Litzkow and Roger and Dianne Diestler.

Confirmation
 No class on January 3. Class on January 10 and 17. On Monday, January 23 we will volunteer at Loaves and Fishes, which is from 3:30 to 6:30 at St. Matthews Catholic Church in St. Paul. No class on the Tuesday after Loaves and Fishes, January 24. Class on January 31.

Snow and Ice Storms Do you remember a few years ago when a GIGANTIC snow and ice storm led to the cancellation of Sunday worship? It is an historic fact! If that happens again on a Sunday and leaving your home is treacherous, a danger to life and limb, please stay home! I would rather see your smiling face in worship the next week than visit you in the hospital! Secondly, if the weather is absolutely horrific, forcing a cancellation of worship, Jo will put a message on the church phone stating that fact. We will also send an email out to all people who have email access, so please check email or call the church during inclement weather for worship related information. Pr. Dave



January Birthdays

- 1 Linda Funkhouser
Dusty Jensen
- 5 Dawn Peterson
- 9 Laurie Herrmann
- 10 Noah Fabie
- 13 Matthew Brummund
Judy Johnson
Kimberly Loewen
- 16 Nancy Hegdahl
- 17 Kathy Spray
- 27 Kevin Arndt
- 29 Norma Alexander
- 30 Sue McNeill
- 31 Kim McNamara



THANK YOU, MEMBERS! We are very grateful for the marvelous outpouring of support for our "Mitten Tree". We received 136 items for the Jeremia House. Also, we deeply appreciate your abundant donations for our Christmas Basket Fund. What a wonderful way to keep **Christ** in **Christmas**...many thanks for your generosity!



Our heartfelt thanks to our Bun Run volunteers for December: Doug and Jo Klein, Sandy and David Grzywinski, Ken McGrew, Larry Litzkow, Julie Ellington.

Fundraiser for the Czech Family

We will hold a fundraiser for Julianna, Ed and Reggie Czech on Saturday, February 11 beginning at 6 pm. We need your help. First of all, please tell friends and family to come. Next, please help with the actual event. Joyce Bluel and Judy Salaba are in charge of the kitchen and making a delicious spaghetti dinner. They will need help with all that is involved in cooking and clean-up. Please reach out to Joyce and Judy to volunteer. Nancy Hegdahl is in charge of the silent auction. Please contact Nancy (or Pr. Dave) with ideas for silent auction donations. We need everyone's help in obtaining the best silent auction items possible. Our purpose in all of this is to make as much money as possible for Julianna, Ed and Reggie. Please help. Finally, to help defray the cost of the event we are calling on our Thrivent members to go online and apply for their work service money. If you do not know how to do that, please ask Nancy Hegdahl for assistance.





**Winter Retreat
Pancake Breakfast**

All are invited to a delicious breakfast after worship on Sunday, January 29. Come hungry! You will be served with smiles and mouth-watering food. All money raised will be used for the Winter Retreat at Camp Onomia. This is for ALL St. Luke members and the money raised will help supplement the costs for people. So make plans to go to the Winter Retreat on February 17-19 and come hungry on January 29.

Onomia Family Camp

Everyone connected with our St. Luke FAMILY is welcome to the Onomia FAMILY camp February 17-19. We are all family. All are welcome! Please come! We will have time for good fellowship, fun, devotions, games, and crafts. Sign up on the kiosk and put it on your calendar.



**January
WORSHIP
ASSISTANTS**

Readers:

- 1 Katy Eggert
- 8 Wendy Bjorklund
- 15 Dick Plagens
- 22 Barb Jensen
- 29 Jill Burchill

Communion:

- 1 Katy Eggert
- 15 Dee Plagens



The 2017 offering envelopes are now available in the Social Hall. Please pick up your box as soon as possible to defray postage expenses. Thank you.

UnDec The Halls!

We will be removing Christmas decorations on Sunday, Jan. 8, after worship. Many hands make light work...please join us!



Ladies Night Out in January will not take place; we are extending the hiatus. Check the February newsletter for the next scheduled event.



Usher Notes

Many thanks to our ushers for December: David Nedrelov, Jill Burchill, Jim Kroschel, Doug Nelson, Larry and Carol Vigdal, Pam Ballis, Katy Eggert. Our ushers for January will be: Alek Landenberger, Volker Landenberger, Doug Klein, Ben Pilgrim, Joan Wilson, Bruce Magnuson, George Heriot, Rob Herrmann.

Thank You "Pastor Dave and members of St. Luke: Thank you so much for your prayers, support and friendship during Adam's illness and passing. We prayed for 'Life' for Adam. God gave him 'Eternal Life'. We know that you all will continue to support Julianna and the boys. We are so grateful. -Don and Julie Czech (Adam's parents)".

Commentaries for the January Gospel Readings

In preparation for worship, please read the Bible text for the day as well as the commentaries found below. Prepare your heart and mind for worship and you will find yourself enriched. Sources for these studies include Working Preacher, Preaching Matthew's Gospel by Richard Jensen, Luke by David Tiede, Matthew by Robert H. Smith and my own notes.

January 1, Luke 2:15-21 Name of Jesus

The reading for today begins with the ending of the Christmas Eve gospel. The angels who appeared to the shepherds have just left to return to heaven. The shepherds look at each other, probably with a combination of disbelief and amazement, then decide to go to Bethlehem to see what this is all about. Remember, in those days, shepherds were held in disdain by religious leaders and society in general. Shepherds weren't the most reputable people at that time. They were not regular members of the synagogue, partly because they had to stay with their flocks. Yet it was to these shepherds, among the least of society at that time, that the angels first appeared with God's amazing birth announcement! The Lord didn't make the announcement to all of the important religious, cultural or political leaders of the time. The Lord chose the shepherds. That is something very important for us all to remember and contemplate. God does not work like WE think God should work. Stay awake, keep alert, for God is at work all around us in ways we often don't anticipate or recognize. Keep your eyes on the Lord. The shepherds hurry off to find Mary, Joseph and the baby. They told Mary and Joseph what had happened. What a story! All were amazed; who wouldn't be? But Mary *pondered* these things in her heart. She pondered, meditated, contemplated, thought about, prayed over all that had happened. This is something for us to imitate as we open our hearts and minds to God's work all around us. Take time to ponder. The shepherds were overjoyed to find everything as the angels had said. They went home glorifying and praising God. What a blessing to be part of God's plan in this most holy and joyful of all times! Just imagine, they had seen the face of God in a baby! Why had God chosen them?! It was simply overwhelming to contemplate. It led to praise and glorifying God as they too pondered all of these fantastic events. Eight days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be circumcised as was commanded in Leviticus 12:3. Joseph and Mary were good Jews and followed the Jewish law. Needless to say, Jesus too, was a good Jew. When they circumcised the baby, they named him Jesus, as directed (Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21). The meaning of Jesus is, "The Lord saves."

January 8, Matthew 3:13-17 Baptism of our Lord

Here we see a very deliberate action by Jesus. Matthew states that Jesus traveled from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. This didn't happen by chance. Jesus traveled to the Jordan River for the sole purpose of being baptized by John. Even when John tried to prevent Jesus, by saying he (John) should be baptized by Jesus; Jesus was not deterred. He had a purpose in going to John and he was going to see that purpose fulfilled. So when John tried to stop Jesus, Jesus said, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." These are the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Matthew. First words are important (as are last words). Robert H. Smith writes, "However much it may confound John and contradict his image of the coming one, Jesus describes his submission as fitting. That means that the path Jesus travels is in absolute harmony with God's plan for the universe....Jesus has come to fulfill, to bring to fullest flower the intent of God enshrined in law and prophecy. That divine intention is here spelled out as *righteousness*, a favorite theme of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel." Smith continues, "Is

righteousness an act of obedience produced by pious human beings? Or is *righteousness* another name for salvation or deliverance, as so often in the psalms (22:31; 40:10; 98:2-3) and prophets (Isaiah 11:4-5; 61:10-11; Micah 6:5)? Is Jesus saying that he has arrived on the scene to model perfect righteousness, yielding perfect obedience to God's ordinances, observing the law of God to the utmost, beginning with a joyous submission to the divine summons issued in John's call to be baptized? Or does Jesus mean that he will be the strange tool by which God will lay healing hands on a broken world and make it "all right"? Does the one necessarily exclude the other? A phrase in 2 Peter (3:13) seems marvelously to summarize the expectation of Matthew and the Matthean Jesus: "We wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." The fulfilling of that hope is the theme not of Jesus' baptism only but of the whole work upon which he launched out of baptism." Jesus is both righteous in himself as well as our righteousness (Romans 3:21-25; I Corinthians 1:30). Jesus is baptized. As he came up from the waters, suddenly the heavens were opened. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove upon Jesus and we hear the voice of God the Father (here we see the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit together) say, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

January 15, John 1:29-42

We begin with John the Baptist who sees Jesus and testifies, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Whenever you read the Gospel of John, please note the number of times it talks about testimony, testifying and witness (same word in Greek). One of the themes of the Gospel of John centers on testimony. Most often in John testimony or witness is an invitation to share in the gospel, a treasure like no other. And so in the next section of our gospel we see Jesus inviting John's disciples to "come and see." This is an invitation to witness the glory of God found in Jesus. After witnessing Jesus' glory, these disciples tell others. In fact in John 1:46 Philip uses these same words, "come and see" when he invites Nathanael to see Jesus. These are words we can use too as we witness to the love and salvation found in Jesus. Come and see... John refers to Jesus twice as the "Lamb of God." In these words we find a reference to the Passover lamb, the blood of which saved the Hebrew people from the angel of death when they were enslaved in Egypt. The blood of the lamb not only saved their lives, it set them free from slavery. Jesus is that lamb, the Lamb of God, who in the same way defeats death and sets us free from the slavery of sin. As John the Baptist said, Jesus is the one who "takes away the sin of the world." He takes away the sin of the whole world... John 3:16 states, "For God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Jesus came to free the world from sin! Again in John 4:42 it says, "They said to the woman (the Samaritan woman who testified to her whole village about Jesus), It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of *the world*." Jesus is the savior of the world. After John the Baptist gives his testimony about Jesus, two of John's disciples followed Jesus. This is when Jesus invites them by saying, "Come and see." One of those disciples was Andrew, brother of Simon Peter. He went to Simon and said, "We have found the Messiah!" Then what did he do? He *brought* Simon to Jesus. Come and see! Jesus looked at Simon and gave him the name "Cephas," which means "rock," and also can be translated as "Peter". This was the beginning for Andrew and Peter following and witnessing to Jesus, the Lamb of God, Savior of the world.

January 22, Matthew 4:12-23

Our reading begins with several transitions taking place. We see a transition from the ministry of John the Baptist (who was arrested and soon to be killed) to the ministry of Jesus. We also see a transition of place. Jesus moves from Nazareth, his family home, to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, where he made his new home. Capernaum was very much of a crossroads in those days. In ancient days, long before Jesus, it was also one of the first areas of Israel to be defeated and swallowed up by the Assyrian Empire in 732 BC. According to Isaiah 9:1-7 (written about 700 years before the birth of Jesus), this area would also be the first of the territories to see the salvation brought about by the birth of the messianic king, hence the quote from Isaiah found in verses 15-16 of today's reading. Concerning Galilee and Capernaum, the commentator Robert Smith wrote, "Galilee was no isolated pocket of purely Jewish settlements. It lay astride international trade routes...and had always been open to Damascus and Syria to the north, Egypt to the south, Phoenicia and the Mediterranean to the northwest and west. Jewish and pagan communities dwelled here, side by side, and precisely here in Galilee, not in Jerusalem, Jesus begins his ministry, silently prefiguring the universality he would later openly proclaim." Here in this area, the crossroads of the world at that time, Jesus begins his ministry with the very words John the Baptist used in his ministry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Indeed it has...wherever we find Jesus, we find the kingdom of heaven. We then see that Jesus begins to call his disciples, starting with brothers Simon and Andrew, followed by two other brothers, John and James, sons of Zebedee. They were all fisherman. They had no training in theology. But Jesus would take care of that. In fact Jesus' call, declaring that he would "make them fish for people" implies that Jesus provides the power to make them fishers of people. They will not be relying solely on their own resources; Jesus will give them the power to carry out their call. This is also Jesus' promise to you and me. Jesus' ministry begins by calling his disciples and ends in the final chapter of Matthew by sending out those same disciples to the ends of the earth to share and live out this good news of Jesus, promising to be with them (and us) until the end of time.

January 29, Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes...it is very difficult to write a few lines about a section of the Bible on which whole volumes of books have been written! In fact, one of my favorite books in all the world is about the beatitudes. It is called, "The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Tradition, by Simon Tugwell. I return to the deep wisdom found in this book over and over again. As Tugwell writes, "The beatitudes draw for us a very strange picture of the man who is blessed: he is poor and unimpressive, hungry and in mourning, trodden on, yet able to make peace." What is Jesus telling us in all of this? One very basic answer is that the way into God's kingdom is by grace. When we recognize that we are poor, hungry, mourning, people in need of God's grace, it is then that we can "come to ourselves" (like the starving Prodigal Son did when he realized that his hope was found not in himself, but in his father (God) - Luke 15:17), and turn to see our help and blessedness in God. Simon Tugwell puts it this way, "Whatever else they may be, then, the beatitudes are a call to us to see ourselves, to live with ourselves, in a way that probably does not come easily to most of us, and to forgo an enterprise that is generally dear to us, the enterprise of getting ourselves into a position where we can see ourselves in a 'good' light. Christian righteousness or rightness with God does not *feel* like righteousness, and we should not devote our energy to bringing ourselves into a position that feels right. It is when we feel ourselves to be poor, humiliated, desperate and all the rest of it that we qualify for the label 'blessed'."

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. -Numbers 6:24