



First Things ~ January, 2022

Epiphany

Today – January 6 – is a special day...in the Christian Church. January 6 is Epiphany, the Gentile Christmas, the day on which we remember that the Savior Jesus Christ is the Savior of – and has been revealed to – all people regardless of where they come from, what language they speak and what the color of their skin is. We are – with billions of others – throughout the world and throughout history, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

The word Epiphany means “reveal.” It’s a reminder that God has revealed himself on the pages of Holy Scripture. God did not give us the Bible to tell us what to do and what not to do – to take all the fun out of life. No, the Creator of the universe gave the the Bible to show us how much he loves us, how he has taken away our sins and how he give us peace in this world – and in our lives – that are, so often devoid of peace.

So today and during the Epiphany season, which stretches through the end of February, let’s thank the Lord for revealing himself to us by hearing his words with joy.

Here’s what’s going on in January

We’re getting back into the normal schedule of activities:

1. [Monday morning Bible study](#) starts on January 10, 9:00 AM. We’ll start the year by looking at two great love stories from the Old Testament contained in the books of Ruth and Esther. It’s a great opportunity to get together to hear God’s word and to get together with other members
2. [Thursday nights are church nights:](#)
 - a. First Thursday – **First Women** get together for devotion, fellowship, and service opportunities
 - b. Second and Fourth Thursdays – **Women of the Word (WOW)** meet. They’re studying Philippians right now
 - c. Third Thursdays – **Men’s Bible Study** if looking at the first chapters of Romans using *In the Grip of Grace* as a guide

3. Sundays

- a. In January, 2020 BC (Before COVID) we began to hear messages about how the LORD dealt with **Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and Joseph** – all in the book of Genesis. This year, we'll pick up the story in Exodus and hear how the LORD deals with Moses and the People of Israel. It's also a great opportunity for you to spend some time in the book of Exodus in your own Bible reading, AND if you miss any of the messages, you can always watch them on online at <https://vimeo.com/keepchristfirst>
- b. Sunday morning Bible study will start again on January 9. Right now we're studying the **Mission Journeys of the Apostle Paul** in the book of Acts. After we finish that, the next topic is **Ten Lies People Tell About God**
- c. CrossTalk – our children's Bible study will begin again on January 16. At that time they'll start a five-week study of all the **young children that we hear about in the Bible**
- d. Annual meeting – will take place after worship on January 30 – please make plans to attend!

Pastoral Vacancies

For quite some time, there have been a growing number of pastoral vacancies in the WELS. From 1975-1985, an average of sixty men graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary every year. These “baby boomers” are retiring and the most recent graduating classes have averaged about 30, hence the shortage. As a result more than 130 congregations in the WELS are calling for a pastor, 24 in the Minnesota District alone. Locally, six congregations are vacant: **St. John's in Nodine, Resurrection and Life in Rochester, St. Matthew's in Winona, Grace in La Crosse** (Pastor Rimmert retired), **Christ in Burr Oak (WI)**, and **St. John's in Sparta** are calling for pastors. In addition, **Pastor Limpert** from **Christ the Rock in Rochester** is on a medical leave of absence.

As many of you are aware, I am serving the vacancy at **St. John's in Nodine**. That means I'll be preaching there the first Sunday of every month – on those Sundays, another local pastor will be here – in addition to going to their meetings, visiting those in the hospital, and organizing other area pastors to help on other Sundays, confirmation classes, shut-in visits, etc. St. John's called **Pastor Jason Strong** from Fairbanks, Alaska in December, so he should be making a decision in the next few weeks.

Please remember to pray for St. John's, all the other congregations who are experiencing a vacancy, and Pastor Limpert.

Thanks Barb, Welcome Kim

Barb Hoff will soon be stepping down from her church secretary role. Thanks for all your years of service. **Kim Czechowicz, AKA Kim CZ**, is replacing her. She will be in the church office on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

God Bless,

Pastor Mark