

Covenant News



January 2023

Pastor's Spin

**Yearly reminder:
there is no
resolution that, if
kept, will make you
more worthy of love.**

**You, as your actual
self and not as some
made up ideal, are
already worthy.**

-Nadia Bolz-Weber

Siblings in Christ of Covenant,

Greetings! With each new year, I try to bring this image up. For us in the Gospel-proclaiming/adoring ministry, this is a rather Good News worth remembering with every January filled with possibilities galore. Honestly, I don't know if I've ever made an actual resolution on December 31 going into January 1, but evidently, a fair share of people do. Places like Planet Fitness, for example, tend to do rather well for that first month, at least, as people commit to better diet and exercise, for starters. There's also those self-made promises to read more, take on more charitable acts, pray more, etc. More this and that, because, evidently, whatever was done with the previous 365 or so days wasn't quite good enough.

And so, from The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber: "Yearly reminder: there is no resolution that, if kept, will make you more worthy of love." That's Good, in fact, Great News, to be sure. Of course, we don't want to take this to the extreme, either: that we can do whatever we want because God is going to love us anyway. Although, there is truth to that, but that kind of "cheap grace," as we Lutherans call it, isn't what we're supposed to be about. We don't want to take advantage of God's mind-boggling kindness and relentless mercy and willingness to forgive over and over again. That kind of mind-boggling love is meant to inspire us to some form of not just yearly resolution, but a daily resolution to "love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself," for starters.

Yes, some mistakes will be made along the way. And we boldly cling to the God who manages to love our “actual selves” and some “made up ideal” of perfect, always following through our every resolution in this life not just for a few days in January, but all the time. God knows we will mess up not just in the diet and exercise realm, but the “love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself” part, too. Yes, God will keep on loving us anyway.

Except, there’s nothing wrong with making a resolution whether it be on January 1 or July 15 or after a time of confession and forgiveness during worship (as if that’s supposed to be a perfect time for such things) to do our discipling a bit better. No, it will not affect how much God cherishes you to your core. It will not alter our worthiness for such grace-filled affection. That’s already taken care of and it will never change. Except, lest we forget, God cherishes other people around us, too. God cherishes them to their core, too. Hence that “love your neighbor as yourself” add-on is a rather big deal for God.

So, in addition to the diet and exercise resolutions, God invites us to make a daily commitment to extend our own kindness and mercy and forgiveness and grace and love with the foundation of the One who made us all worthy for all the above from God directly. Yes, we will fall short plenty of times. Regardless, there’s always a January 2. There’s always the day after we confess and receive forgiveness from God. There’s always an opportunity to try again, as if that’s what grace is all about. So, no, nothing done in 2023 will make God love us more, but our neighbors may be slightly better off, neighbors who God loves, too, neighbors who God wants to experience their own wholeness and new life. We do so boldly knowing that our worthiness is already taken care of not just this year, but for all eternity. Thanks be to God, indeed!

In Christ,
Pastor Brad

From all of us at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant:



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

1/10 Maud Wright
1/11 Christopher Knerem
1/12 Joshua Reddig
1/14 Kelly (Constant) Bhatnagar
1/16 Rebecca Werner
1/17 Phyllis Nemeth
1/20 John Werner
1/22 Alivia Kyle
1/24 Bryan Treichel
1/25 Janet Wilkens
1/25 Karen Zack
1/28 Jean Smith
1/29 Jean Rusher

IN LOVING Memory

We are saddened that two beloved past members of our Covenant family died in December: Francis Svoboda (93) on the 1st, in Marietta, Georgia, and John Werner, Sr. (99) just before Christmas in Florida.

FREE community MEAL

Our next FREE community meal will be Thursday, January 28, from 4-5pm, downstairs in our fellowship hall. If you need a break from cooking and baking, feel free to have a seat here, and we will serve you an entrée, side dishes, drinks, and dessert, too! If you know of others who could use this night off

from being in the kitchen, please let them know. Again, it's FREE to anyone and everyone who joins us.

FAREWELL AND GODSPEED

It is with saddened hearts that we remind you our beloved organist, Robin Crawford, will be retiring following the worship on January 29. For years, she has not only been our musical leader, but for the Lutheran Church of the Master

as well. And so, the Sunday before, January 22, we will join our siblings in Christ for a joint-worship at Master (860 Northfield Rd., Bedford) at 10am, with a luncheon to follow the worship, so that we may best honor our talented and gifted sister in Christ. Although we will miss her dearly, we wish her and John our deepest blessings of relaxation and new life. From all of us at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant, we thank you, Robin!

Reminder: Worship Change for Sunday, January 22

Time: 10am

Place: Lutheran Church of the Master

There will not be a worship at Covenant this day!

Dates to Remember

<i>Sunday, January 8</i>	<i>Epiphany of Our Lord (from January 6)</i>
<i>Sunday, February 19</i>	<i>Transfiguration of Our Lord</i>
<i>Wednesday, February 22</i>	<i>Ash Wednesday</i>
<i>Sunday, February 26</i>	<i>First Sunday of Lent</i>
<i>Sunday, April 2</i>	<i>Palm Sunday</i>
<i>Thursday, April 6</i>	<i>Maundy Thursday</i>
<i>Friday, April 7</i>	<i>Good Friday</i>
<i>Sunday, April 9</i>	<i>Resurrection of Our Lord</i>
<i>Sunday, May 28</i>	<i>Pentecost Sunday</i>
<i>Sunday, June 4</i>	<i>Holy Trinity Sunday</i>
<i>Sunday, October 29</i>	<i>Reformation Sunday</i>
<i>Sunday, November 5</i>	<i>All Saints Sunday</i>
<i>Sunday, November 19</i>	<i>Day of Thanksgiving</i>
<i>Sunday, November 26</i>	<i>First Sunday of Advent</i>
<i>Sunday, December 24</i>	<i>Christmas Eve</i>
<i>Monday, December 25</i>	<i>Christmas Day</i>

A Time to Pay Attention

I have a bad habit of looking at my feet when I walk. I don't often stub my toe or trip on uneven ground, but occasionally I run into something or someone I'm not expecting. Our 2-year-old has the opposite issue. While we walk around our neighborhood, his head is always up and looking around. This means he often trips over his feet, but his view of the world is much broader than mine. As is the case with most toddlers, he might ask, "What's that?" or "What's their name?" or "What's that called?" His curiosity reminds me that a simple shift in perspective can engender wonder.

Whether I'm looking at my feet while I walk, hunching over my cellphone or resting my elbows on a desk at work, this posture of folding inward prevents me from truly seeing the expansiveness of God's good creation. This makes me wonder about the opportunities we miss simply because our posture doesn't allow us to see the world around us.

Epiphany marks the day and the church season when Jesus comes to be named and understood as God's own son, the living and breathing manifestation of God in our midst. The Epiphany story

begins with three magi noticing a new star and setting off on a journey. Arriving at their destination, these three people from distant places encounter a child born to a teenage mother in a little-known town, a birth heralded by livestock and ranchers. Jesus' birth story isn't what most imagine when they think of a newborn king. Yet the magi come to see and understand Jesus as God on Earth.

The name Epiphany comes from the Greek *epiphaneia*, meaning "manifestation." Most of us think of an epiphany as a flash of insight, but what if Epiphany is an invitation to notice the beauty and brilliance of what's already there?

The magi found a new star in the sky. They bore witness to the presence of God within little Jesus. And during the time after Epiphany, we'll hear Gospel stories of Jesus growing in his understanding of who he is as God's child and of the kind of messiah he is called to be. Perhaps, then, Epiphany is less a sudden realization and more a growth in understanding.

When I realign my focus, when I notice how much I cast my eyes to the ground or hunch over, I can lift my head, straighten my posture and enjoy a new perspective. With my eyes up, I'm free to perceive and appreciate the beautiful diversity of the people and plants and creatures I encounter. I can truly see my neighbors, noticing when someone is having a rough day. I can even serve my neighbor who's reaching out for help.

Amid what's been a very challenging season for many, something as simple as letting someone know you've noticed them can produce a profound impact. We long to be seen by each other and God. Epiphany calls us to see our neighbors—our neighbor in need, our neighbor who's struggling, our neighbor who puts on a brave face at worship while suffering inside, as well as our neighbor who's rejoicing. It calls us to notice neighbors who don't look, worship, speak, vote or pray as we do. It calls us to recognize them, too, as God's children.

How differently might we treat one another if the first thing we noticed about someone was their identity as a beloved child of God?

When we notice and focus on what draws us together rather than what drives us apart, we can approach our differences from a place of genuine care and concern for one another's well-being. By seeking to understand our neighbors, we can build the world God intends—a world ruled by peace, built upon equity and justice, and infused with the sweet fragrance of love.

During this time after Epiphany, let's commit to noticing and celebrating all the ways God appears in our time and place. You might create a list and write down every time you notice God in your world—from people, plants and animals to the movements of stars and other heavenly bodies.

Take a cue from my 2-year-old: Keep your head up and look around. Maybe you'll fill up your notebook with signs of God's presence so quickly that you'll need to buy another one. Notice your opportunities to bless and be blessed by others. Surely the Messiah is with us.

- *The Rev. Chris Michaelis (originally published January 6, 2022, on LivingLutheran.org)*

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant

January 2023

Server Schedule	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
AG: Sheila Werner, Annie Copeland, Paula Hohenstein	1 8:00 am Epiphany of Our Lord	2 6:30-8:00 pm Girl Scout troop meeting in Nursery	3 1:30 pm Worship & Music Meeting 6:30 p.m. Women's AA meeting in Hall	4	5	6 6:30-8:30pm GOD AA meeting in Parish Hall	7 5:00 pm Worship in Sanctuary 3:00 pm Women's AA meeting in Hall
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	8 9:00 am Epiphany of Our Lord	9 6:30-8:00 pm Girl Scout troop meeting in Nursery	10: 6:30 p.m. Women's AA meeting in Hall 7:00 Council Meeting	11	12	13 6:30-8:30pm GOD AA meeting in Parish Hall	14 3:00 pm Women's AA meeting in Hall
AG: Joan Garvin, Marie Zahn, Jen Garberich	15:9:00 am Second Sunday after Epiphany	16	17 6:30 p.m. Women's AA meeting in Hall	18	19	20 6:30-8:30pm GOD AA meeting in Parish Hall	21 3:00 pm Women's AA Meeting in Hall 5:00 pm Worship in Sanctuary
AG: Claudia Senderak, Jean Rusher, Gwen Susaneck	22:10:00 am Joint Service at Lutheran Church of the Master	23 6:30-8:00 pm Girl Scout troop meeting in Nursery	24 6:30 p.m. Women's AA meeting in Hall	25	26 5:00-6:00 pm Community Meal In Parish Hall	27 6:30-8:30pm GOD AA meeting in Parish Hall	28 3:00 pm Women's AA meeting in Hall
AG: Claudia Senerak, Jean Rusher, Gwen Susaneck	29 9:00 am Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	30	31 6:30 p.m. Women's AA meeting in Hall	Feb 1	2	3 6:30-8:30pm GOD AA meeting in Parish Hall	4 3:00 pm Women's AA Meeting in Hall 5:00 pm Worship in Sanctuary

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The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
19000 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137

