

The Witness

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20 ESV

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LCMS

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January 2022

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Volume 7 No. 1

January is the occasion for two important observances in the church year. These observances can be overshadowed by Christmas, which looms so large not only in the Christian consciousness but also in the secular society. But we should not allow ourselves to be distracted from the festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord on January 6, or from the festival of the Baptism of Our Lord on January 9.

Epiphany commemorates the visit of the Wise Men to the boy Jesus in Bethlehem. This is not really a part of the Christmas story, because it was a separate event, which occurred approximately two years after the Lord's birth. On Christmas, Jesus came to the world. On Epiphany, the world came to Jesus – in the form of the wise men from the east seeking him out, and worshipping him as the King of the Jews and as their own divine King. Sometimes in the popular parlance of past generations, Epiphany was described as "Little Christmas." The Christmas festival on December 25, and the Epiphany festival on January 6, were like bookends, on either end of the twelve-day celebratory season of Christmas. So, don't let your observance of the twelve days of Christmas fade out with a whimper.

The Baptism of Our Lord was traditionally observed on the same day as Epiphany, but for the past several decades, many liturgical churches have separated these two festivals, so that the unique focus of each can be given its proper due. In his baptism, Jesus entered upon his public ministry. According to his human nature, he was therein endowed with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to empower him for that ministry. His baptism was, therefore, the equivalent of his ordination. But it was more than that.

When Jesus, the righteous one, submitted himself to a baptism that was intended for the unrighteous, he thereby expressed his solidarity with sinful humanity, and allowed the sins of the world to be imputed to him. And he, in turn, sanctified the water of this sacrament in such a way that his righteousness was, in a sense, put into that water, so that it will now cling to those who are washed in it. He became dirty with our sins and unrighteousness in his baptism, so that we can become clean with his righteousness and forgiveness in our baptism.

This understanding is reflected, in part, in what St. Paul wrote to Titus: "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (3:4-7).

So, on the festival of Our Lord's Baptism on January 9, we will not only remember his baptism, but we will also remember our own. We will thank God for the "great exchange," by which Christ carried our sins to the cross and died for them there; and by which we are now justified in Christ, by faith, and are made clean before God through his mercy and obedience.

In Christ,
Pastor Matthew Uttenreither



'Tis More Blessed to Give Than to Receive

“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35)

And indeed, it is. Does this not strike a chord that resonates in us all? Which of us can't recall the look of surprise and thanks for the Christmas gifts that we labored to give to those whom we love? And the joy written on their face when that gift is received with thanksgiving means more than all the gifts we have received. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Our Lord knew this because He practiced it. He gave of Himself – sparing not even His life in death – in order to give us back to our Father in heaven. He knew that in giving you get more because joy is multiplied in giving. The one who receives and the one who gives both rejoice in what is given and received. And, what is more, the one who receives only wants to give back to the one who gave so generously in thanksgiving.

So it is with our tithes and offerings in church. We want to give because we have received from God all that we are and all that we have. Our giving does not originate in what we must do to earn God's favor. We have God's favor because of His gift of His Son, given through Word and Sacrament. Thus, we are made free from the compulsion of giving so that our tithes and offering are freely given in thanksgiving for what God has so generously given to us.

Why then does the church struggle to make budgets? Why does the church always seem stretched so thin when it is the place where God continually gives us His forgiveness of sins? Why does the church struggle when God, out of love for us, generously pours out His grace and mercy?

It is because we are sinners. Our fallen nature makes us selfish and miserly. It leads us to believe that we can have our cake and eat it, too. Because of sin, we want God's grace and mercy; we want His blessings of body and soul. But we don't want to share it with those around us. We want to remain comfortable in our own self-contained, neat, and tidy lives – without the headaches of loving those around us by helping them in their time of need.

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Remember that God has placed you in a church, not only to receive His grace and mercy, but to press His eternal and temporal blessings into service to your neighbor.

Your tithes and offerings ensure that those around you have a pastor to preach the life-saving and life-giving Word of God. They ensure that the lights, heat, and air-conditioning are working. They ensure there is water for Holy Baptism as well as bread and wine for Holy Communion. They even ensure that your pastor has food and clothing and presents for his own family. The gifts of God are immeasurable. They multiply and redound to everyone's good as the fish and loaves in the feeding of the five thousand.

So, remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” And remember the joy that attended the gifts you gave at Christmas. This same joy attends your gifts to the church.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry



**Lutheran Women's
Missionary League**
Lutheran Women
In Mission

Where Mites Go

Helping Hands for Lutheran Deaf Outreach

Grant: \$50,000

Lutheran Deaf Outreach wants to help Deaf people have a saving relationship with Christ by training Deaf and Hearing people to share Jesus with Deaf people. They work through congregations to reach Deaf people and families in their community. There are over 500,000 Deaf people, plus their families, in the United States. The need is great to equip more Deaf leaders through Jesus Signs Training Workshops so they may effectively witness the saving message of Jesus Christ. This grant will assist in expanding training through the sharing of resources, by assisting pastors, and by instructing individuals to lead the workshops. It will also help with workshop expenses to expand training and provide resources throughout the United States.

Testimonies from Around the World
Cameroon

My name is Stephanie. I am one of those who have benefited from the gifts you sent to the church in Cameroon. I cannot begin to tell you how grateful I feel, words cannot express my gratitude. I can only say thank you so much for the invaluable gifts! I have begun to read some of the magazines like home life and many others. I have learned a lot already and I am so overwhelmed with joy at your wonderful, selfless gesture. I was also able to get some Bibles and give out to some new Christians who do not have. I also got a lot of material for my local church and my pastor feels so happy.



The Board of Christian Ministries continues to collect food donations **every Sunday** for local food pantries. Many people in our community depend upon these pantries to feed their families during this continuing pandemic. Any canned or packaged items of your choice would be appreciated.



A very big thank you to all the cookie bakers who contributed to our Cookie Walk on December 12th. And, thanks to everyone who purchased these yummy treats. Your Kindness and generosity was greatly appreciated and enjoyed!

Time & Talent

Greeters

January 2	Judy Darville Rosalie Streng
January 9	Pam Hrajnoha Lois Marten
January 16	Gail Bujnowski Rosalie Streng
January 23	Judy Darville Lois Marten
January 30	Gail Bujnowski Pam Hrajnoha

Deacons

January 2	Jim Jenne
January 9	Jonathan Schultz
January 16	Tom Friedewald
January 23	Jim Jenne
January 30	Jonathan Schultz

Altar Guild

January	Gail Bujnowski Judy Darville
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We three Kings

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

Refrain:

O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

[Refrain]

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.

[Refrain]

Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshiping God on high.

[Refrain]

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

[Refrain]

Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies.

[Refrain]

'We Three Kings' (or 'We Three Kings of Orient Are') is an Aeolian mode Christmas carol dating from 1857.

The carol was composed by American clergyman and hymnodist, John Henry Hopkins Jr. and appeared in his *Carols, Hymns and Songs* collection in 1872. Its original use was for an elaborate Nativity drama Hopkins was staging.

It's intended as an Epiphany carol, meaning it's technically meant to be sung towards the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas (Epiphany is 6 January in 2022). But with its great tune and message of hope, the popular carol – which was originally published as 'Three Kings of Orient' – is still one of the most frequently performed throughout the entire Christmas season, including before Christmas Day.

The carol tells the story of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection – and the melody alternates between regal, minor-sounding Aeolian mode verses, in which the Three Wise Men announce what gifts they're presenting to the son of God, and a major chorus joyfully proclaiming the beauty of the star guiding their way to the manger.



This Is God's New Year

I believe

That I enter a glorious new year
To be filled with prayer and praise.
With service to God and mankind,
With inspired creative activity.

I believe

That God's presence goes with me
Wherever I shall go this year,
By train or plane or car or boat,
Slowly paced on foot, or high in air.

I believe

His love is shining in my body,
His wisdom guides my mind,
His peace fills me with poise,
His strength is ever at my call.

Oh I believe

That this is God's new year.

—Elizabeth Searle Lamb

We congratulate the following members of Ascension as they celebrate their **birthdays** in January.

January 5	Kelee Schwenn
January 8	Lance Ahlgrim
January 16	Rev. Julio Orozco
January 22	Carolyn Jannusch
January 29	Mark Plucinski
January 31	Billy Powyszynski



We also congratulate the following couples as they celebrate their **wedding anniversaries** in January.

None on record

These are the **birthdays** and **wedding anniversaries** recorded in our church records for the coming month. If any birthday or anniversary was omitted, please notify the church office.

* * *

Have A
Blessed
New Year!

2021 ASCENSION COUNCIL BOARD MEMBERS

President:	Tom Friedewald
Vice President:	Jim Jenne
Treasurer:	Sandy Friedewald
Secretary:	Audrey Schultz
Financial Secretary:	Carolyn Jannusch
Board of Deacons:	Jim Jenne (Chair) Hal Downs Tom Friedewald Jim Jenne Jonathan Schultz
Board of Christian Ministries	Lois Marten (Chair)
Board of Trustees:	Jason Romano (Chair)
Board of Youth:	Sarah Lindahl (Chair)

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OFFICIAL ACTS

None on record

Do you have an announcement to share about your family such as a birth, death, engagement, graduation, etc., **let us know! We'd love to hear from you!**

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