

The Reporter

January 2023

The Reporter

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“A Bright Light in a Dark World”

by Pastor Proeber

The past week was the festival of Epiphany. Because it comes during the middle of the week, it can be easily overlooked. One might even have to check a calendar just to make sure it is the right day.

Sadly, Epiphany pales in comparison to Christmas. There are no special services. No special decorations. Nothing really specific to say, this is Epiphany. There are some readings which signal the transition from Christmas to Epiphany, such as the visit of the Magi. Even these tend to be blended into the Christmas account.

While Epiphany does not have the emphasis of Christmas or Easter, we really shouldn't overlook the significance of this special time of the Church Year. Epiphany literally means “with light.” It is the time when Scripture lessons draw us to Jesus as True God and True Man, perfectly equipped to be the Savior of all people. Some of the lessons are very familiar: the Baptism of Jesus, John's proclamation that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the calling of the first disciples, and the first of many miracles. The culmination of Epiphany is the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Through these accounts our Lord leaves no room for doubt, and clearly declares Jesus is the Savior sent by him, and the Savior we desperately need. For this reason Epiphany is a bright light in a dark world.

When we read the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we learn a great deal about Jesus. He is God from God. He is Light from Light. So, much of the Athanasian and Nicene Creeds are based on what John writes. We need to pay particular attention to the truth Jesus is the Light sent into the world which was made dark by sin and death.

We don't have to look hard or long to see the darkness of this world. We see hatred, bitterness, and animosity. We witness a lack of love and a refusal to forgive. We see selfishness and self-interest as the rational and motivational force for just about everything. What makes the darkness even deeper is that there is a rejection to accept this is what is actually happening.

You and I are not immune from the darkness of the world. Certainly we live in the world and chagrin fills our hearts because everything seems to be getting worse. What we may not readily see or acknowledge is that we find that darkness becoming more prevalent in us. There is a darkness, a blackness which often reveals itself. We harbor hatred, bitterness, and animosity in our hearts. We find it difficult to love unconditionally and forgive freely as we have been forgiven. We do more than we

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care to admit out of selfishness and an attitude which says, “what’s in it for me!”

We live in a dark world, and we have to confess that darkness is alive and well in us. This is what makes Epiphany a much needed time of joy and change. During this season we come to learn Jesus came as the Light of the world, and he came to bring light and life into our lives. There is no doubt, we need Jesus to come into our lives and brightly shine with his saving love. Literally he opens our eyes so we can see where we are, and what we are. He also shines with his light to show us how we can change our life and our position. His light guides us. His light purifies us. It is also his light which allows us to continue to walk in his incredible light as we go through this dark world.

This is the beauty of his bright light. It is also why we need to make a conscious effort to remain in his light.

We live in a world of distractions. There are many things which catch our attention and make us wonder, what’s going on beyond what I can see? You could think of it this way. When you take a walk at night darkness and shadows hide so much from our sight. It is because we can’t see clearly that we are on edge, even fearful of what lurks in the shadows. The devil wants to heighten our uncertainty and our fears. So he relies on the darkness, the uncertainty, and the unknown to make us fearful. He wants us to forget about the light our Savior provides. He is even intent on drawing us back into the darkness.

This is why the light of our Savior is precious, and desperately needed. It lights our way so we can walk safely and fearlessly through this dark world. It also alerts us to the dangers which lie in wait in the darkness. We need to rely on the bright light of our Savior, and this is what makes our Epiphany season so important.

Epiphany is more than the transition between Christmas and Lent. It is a time of revelation and reflection. During Epiphany we need to focus on the evidence which shows Jesus is the Christ, the Light of the world, and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We also need to carefully listen to testimony after testimony telling us here is God the Father’s chosen Servant into whom we put our trust.

So, savor the time of Epiphany. Don’t ignore its lessons. Don’t let the absence of decorations leave you feeling empty inside. Don’t allow the distractions of this dark world keep you from rejoicing in Jesus. He is the bright light for our sin-darkened and dying world.



Christ is the world’s Light, Christ and none other;
Born in our darkness, he became our brother.
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high!

Christ is the world’s life, Christ and none other;
Sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother.
He who redeemed us reigns with God the Father:
Glory to God on high!

Christian Worship 343 st. 1 & 3

Christmas at Our Redeemer 2022



Christmas is always a special time of year. There are special worship services. There are the opportunities for fellowship and service. In addition, the sanctuary of the church is always wonderfully decorated. None of these would matter if it were not for the birth of the Christ Child. It is this special gift of a loving God which makes everything we do meaningful and memorable. We are not like the rest of the world, for we gather as God's dearly loved and forgiven people to remember what he required Jesus to do. It is this which brings great joy when we sing our hymns of praise, when we hear the Gospel account of Luke, and when we savor the true meaning of this precious time of year.

O, Jesus Christ, your manger is
my paradise where my soul
is reclining.

For there, O Lord,
we find the Word
Made flesh for us —
Your grace is brightly shining.

The world may hold
her wealth and gold;
But you, my heart keep Christ
as your true treasure.
To him hold fast until at last
a crown is yours and
honor in full measure.



“Advent and Christmas—A Time of Preparation and Rejoicing”



The preparation for our Savior’s birth usually fills the month of December with many rich and rewarding activities. It is a time for fellowship and festivities. Most important, it is a time to reflect on God’s promise to send a Savior, and the fulfillment of that promise.

Advent led us into the familiar prophecy of Isaiah. It is hard to imagine 600 years before Jesus ever came into the world, the Lord’s prophet offered beautiful and specific pictures regarding God’s Savior—the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head.

For the four Sundays of Advent we examined Isaiah 9:1-2—¹Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for the land that was in anguish. In the former times, he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will cause it to be glorious, along the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles. ²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned.

The lesson offered a special promise of hope because God said a glorious light would dawn upon his people. That light was Jesus, and he accomplished everything his Father said he would. He would give light to those walking in the darkness of sin. He would provide light for those who were trapped in the darkness of death. He would shine light into the lives of those who endured the dark burden of anguish. Most important, he would be a matchless light to make people glorious in his sight.

These services ushered in the coming of Jesus as the Light of the world. On Christmas Eve, Scripture and song led us to the manger and the events of our Savior’s birth. Here we were able to stand in awe and wonder as we heard God’s incredible invitation, and listen to the great good news proclaimed to the world: “Today a Savior has been born for you; he is Christ the Lord!”

Although it was a simple and more subdued service, Christmas day presented a second opportunity to rejoice and sing at the Savior’s birth. The service followed Luther’s Christmas Hymn: “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.” What makes this hymn so intriguing was he wrote it to tell the Christmas Gospel to his family. The hymn offered both questions and answers for consideration:

What are God’s Glad Tidings of Great Joy?

What are the Gifts God has Bestowed?

What does God Invite Me to See?

What Response does God Prompt in Me?

While the celebration of Christmas has come and gone, and soon the decorations will be packed away, what isn’t lost is the message Advent and Christmas proclaim. It is in this message, and with this message we live, find hope, and have inexpressible joy.

Outreach Committee Update



The Outreach Committee will meet on January 17th at 7:00 pm to make plans to organize events which will provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some of the events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We pray these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of God's undeserved love we proclaim. If you have an idea regarding an event, or if you are able to participate in planning these events, come.

There are some plans already in the works . . .

- ☐ **March** is open during Lent, but there have been activities in the past—movies with pizza, pot-lucks, special presentations. Ideas for March are welcome!
- ☐ **April's** main focus is the observance of Easter and the brunch which follows. New this year will be a spring "festival," similar to the Fall Festival we had last October. While it is still in the early planning stages, ideas are always welcome. Please share them with Emily Schroeder.
- ☐ **May** is open, but there have been activities such as a progressive dinner.
- ☐ **June** is usually the time for the Ice Cream Social.
- ☐ **July** is our yearly Fourth of July celebration with a movie, barbeque, and fireworks.
- ☐ **August** is the Beach, Bike, Barbeque which is always an enjoyable afternoon at Goleta Beach with games and food.
- ☐ **September** is open.
- ☐ **October** has become the month for our Fall Festival. It was new last year, and very well received. We will hold it again and try to improve on what we previously did.
- ☐ **November** is Thanksgiving time and our pre-Thanksgiving pot-luck dinner at the church.
- ☐ **December** ushers in the celebration of our Savior's birth. There is also chili, decorating, and other activities.



January Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

- 3rd - Linda W.
- 5th - Jessica D., Marrissa H.
- 11th - David C.
- 14th - Karolyn H.
- 16th - Lucas S. Jim E.
- 21st - Tiera S.

Notes & News

Handbell Choir

Practices for the seasons of Epiphany, Lent and Easter will resume in January. They are every Monday evening at 7:00 pm.

We are thankful for those who generously gave of their time and efforts to make practices, and ring for our worship services—especially during the Advent and Christmas worship services.

There is also an invitation—if you are curious, or if you would like to try ringing—to speak with Debbie about getting involved.

New ringers are always welcome.

Wednesday Evening Bible Class

After a short break over Advent and Christmas, the evening study will resume at 7:00 pm, Wednesday, January 11th.

For the next several weeks, prior to Lent, the class will consider the miracles of Jesus. Some of the elements will include: the purpose of the miracle; the fulfillment of prophecy; what makes it notable; and when does it

happen in Jesus' ministry.

The miracles we will consider are —

The Changing of Water into Wine

The Healing of the Paralytic

The Healing of the Man Born Blind

The Raising of Lazarus

The Healing of Malchus' Ear

If you ever wondered about Jesus' miracles and what made them so special, this would be the class for you. Remember, it starts Wednesday, January 11th at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. Hope to see you there!

Sunday Morning Bible Class

As always there is a regularly scheduled class after the worship service. It is a regular study called: "Digging Deeper. It looks at one of the appointed lessons for the day, and offers the opportunity to review the lesson, and to consider "my view" -- a section on application for today.

Each lesson is a unit

by itself, so if you cannot make Bible Class every Sunday, you can still drop in without missing any of the previous lessons.

Sunday School

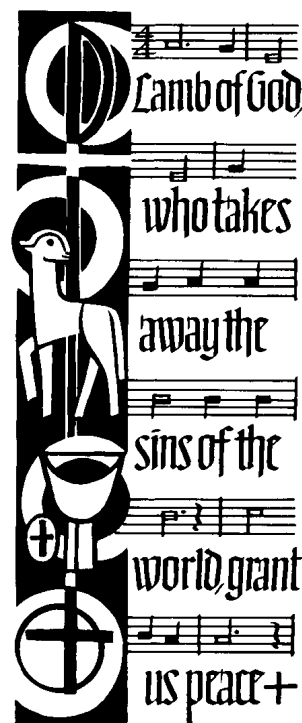
Through the end of 2022 Sunday School was held regularly, and we thank Sonja Todd for teaching on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. With the New Year, we are in need of teachers.

This is a special ministry we offer to the families within our congregation. There is also one non-member family interested in Sun-day School when it restarts. Please give this area of service your prayerful consider,

The requirements will depend on the number of teachers we have. It could be once a month, or it could be less if we get additional teachers.

Materials are provided and are very comprehensive. All that is needed is a willing and dedicated heart.

Please speak to Pastor Proeber for more information, or if you are interested in teaching as part of a rotation.



Serve the Lord with Gladness

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck—gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Hard-copy or email to Pastor Proeber (pastor.orlcsb@gmail.com)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

With the New Year, we invite all our members to provide material for the Reporter. Throughout the past volumes—over 20 years—articles authored by others have really made every issue more interesting. We pray that every member will provide an article for 2023. If you have an idea, but you are not sure to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber for advice.

Meetings for January

Church Council and Committee Meetings	January 10 th at 7:00 pm
Outreach Planning	January 17 th at 10:00 am

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to help.

Annual Congregational Meeting January 15th after the worship service

Through the course of the year we hold four quarterly congregational meetings. These are the main ministry planning meetings of our congregation. They are required by the congregation's Constitution and By-Laws, and they provide an opportunity for planning and discussion. On January 15th, following the worship service, we will have our Annual Congregational Meeting. During this meeting, 2022 will be reviewed. We will rejoice in the blessings, and we will acknowledge the challenges and short-comings we experienced. Also during this meeting, we will consider the ministry plan for 2023 together with the funding plan for that ministry. The standing committees have prayerfully considered the resources with which we have been entrusted, and have assembled a proposed plan. It remains the congregation's responsibility to approve it, and to make sure it is undertaken to the best of our ability, and always with the help of the Lord.

Please take the time, and consider it both your privilege and responsibility to attend this meeting. It will be a benefit both to you, as well as the entire congregation if everyone understands what we plan to do—to the glory of our Lord and for the spread of the Gospel.

Devotional Corner

"Who is Jesus?"

On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." Others said, "He is the Christ." Still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" Thus the people were divided because of Jesus.

John 7:40-43

The crowds were divided. They could not come to any agreement regarding Jesus. Some thought he was the "prophet" promised by God through Moses. Some thought he was the Christ, the one promised by God to set them free. Still others couldn't accept anything about Jesus, because he didn't fit their understanding of the Scriptures. So, who is Jesus? It is a question for which I need an answer.

Today there are still many of the same beliefs and opinions about Jesus. Some people still believe he is a prophet, but only a prophet. Some still believe he was sent by God, but they stop short of believing he is God. There are even some who reject Jesus altogether because he does not conform to their ideas regarding the Savior they want. Unfortunately, all these opinions and beliefs end in conflict and confusion, and ultimately in eternal condemnation.

The only reliable answer comes from God's Word and is believed through faith worked by the Holy Spirit. God's Word provides the clear truth regarding Jesus. Without hesitation or qualification it proclaims Jesus is true God and true Man born of Mary. It also proclaims Jesus is the Christ sent by God to suffer and die to pay the price for my freedom. It further proclaims Jesus is the victorious Savior who lives, rules, and protects me with his unsurpassed power and undeserved love. It is faith which trusts everything the Bible says. It is finally faith which leads me to confidently confess Jesus is everything the Bible says he is.

The world may be full of opinions and beliefs regarding Jesus, but there is only one truth. It is the truth which saves, and it is the truth to which I must cling: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and my only Savior.

Prayer Thoughts

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, and drives away all fear.

O Jesus, Shepherd, Guardian, Friend, my Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End, accept the praise I bring.

Christian Worship 358 st. 1 & 5

January 2023

Church Office: 967-1128


Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Parsonage Phone: 967-3570

Grow in Grace!

Encourage one another!

Proclaim what we have seen and heard!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Lord's Supper Sunday Worship & Streaming 9:30 am	 Sacrament of Communion				6 Office Hours 10:00 am -2:30 pm	7 Clean Scheffler Lawn beginning January 8—Brown
8 Sunday Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Education 11:00 am	9	10 Church Council 7:00 pm Committees 8:00 pm	11 Bible Study 7:00 pm Changing Water into Wine	12	13 Office Hours 10:00 am -2:30 pm	14 Clean L. Schroeder Decorations to be taken down 10:00 am
15 Sunday Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Congregational Meeting 11:00 am	16	17 Outreach / Fellowship Planning 7:00 pm	18 Bible Study 7:00 pm Healing of the Paralytic		20 Office Hours 10:00 am -2:30 pm	21 Clean J. Schroeder Lawn beginning January 22—Todd
22 Lord's Supper Sunday Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Education 11:00 am	23 Handbell practice TBD	24	25 Bible Study 7:00 pm Healing of the Blind Man	26	27 Office Hours 10:00 am -2:30 pm	28 Clean C. Schuler
29 Sunday Worship & Streaming 9:30 am Education 11:00 am	30 Handbell practice TBD	31 				