

# St. John's Newsletter – Winter 2013

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## From His Word ...

As the year began, we celebrated Epiphany on January 6. The Gospel from Matthew 2 drew our attention to the visit of the wise men.

Curiosity asks many unanswerable questions about them. How many were there? Where exactly did they come from? What was the star that they saw? How did they know that it marked Christ's birth? How long after his birth did they arrive?

Since the Bible does not answer these questions, we don't need to know the answers for our faith or Christian life. If we needed to know, God would have told us.

But Matthew does record what gifts they brought. "Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" (Matthew 2:11 NIV84). Although he does not explain these gifts, they do remind us of spiritual truths that the rest of the Bible clearly teaches.

**Gold.** Before wealth was kept in bank accounts and mutual funds, gold marked a person's financial worth. Still today gold is often considered one of the securest investments, no matter what the economy or stock market is doing.

All the wealth of this world and more belonged to that young child held by Mary. Through him all things had been created. All was his. But you, dear Christians, know "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV84).

As Jesus took on himself our spiritual debt of sin and paid it in full with his holy, precious blood, he redeemed us to be his people. As Jesus reigns in your heart, "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9 NIV84). This gift of royal gold reminds us that he is our King and we are his blood-bought people.

**Incense.** "May my prayer be set before you like incense" (Psalm 141:2 NIV84), David

writes. At the Tabernacle and then at the Temple, the altar of incense stood before the Most Holy Place, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Just as incense rises with a sweet smell from the altar, so our prayers are a fragrant offering when they rise from the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

Our sin makes our prayers unacceptable to the holy God. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2 NIV84).

But Jesus was born to take away our sins. "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2 NIV84).

So when we pray in his name, trusting his promise of full and free forgiveness through his blood, he speaks to the Father in our defense (1 John 2:1). He presents your prayers as fragrant incense, pleasing to God. So we pray to Jesus, for he is our God and Savior.

**Myrrh.** Mark tells us that when they nailed Jesus to the cross, they offered him wine mixed with myrrh to numb the pain, but Jesus refused to drink it (Mark 15:23). John tells us that Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes to prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39).

The Son of God became the Son of Man to die for us, suffering the full punishment for our sins. The Prince of life truly died for you. See his dead body laid in a tomb wrapped with aloes and myrrh.

But take heart! He rose from the dead. "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Psalm 16:10 NIV84), Jesus foretold through the mouth of David. Jesus is your living Savior, dear friend. Believe his promise: "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19 NIV84).

# Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held on January 13, 2013, after the annual potluck and opened with prayer. The reports were all included in the Annual Report, which is available on the table in the narthex.

The following councilmen were elected: Chad Rohloff as Elder, Gerald Hoffman as Treasurer, Charles Nelson as Trustee. Installation of council members was scheduled for January 20.

The voters discussed repairing the roofs. They passed a motion to do all three roofs (church, parsonage, and garage) and a second motion to pursue the bid from Jaeger Associates for a metal shingled roof. More details concerning the roofing project are in the next article.

Confirmation and examination were set for April 14. Cody Greiner is our confirmand this year.

The voters authorized the release of the financial information the synod asks for.

The Lenten and Easter services time will be the same as last year. Lent begins Wednesday February 13. Midweek service times will be 7:00 p.m. including Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Easter is March 31 with Easter breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and the Easter Festival Service at 9:00 a.m.

The interest from the Scholarship Fund will be given toward Abi and Caleb Bitter's expenses at Great Plains Lutheran High School.

The Congregational Mission Offering (CMO) for 2013 was kept at \$8000.

The Lutheran Institutional Ministry Association (LIMA) commitment for 2013 was kept at \$500.

The organist salary was kept at \$3240.

The business mileage reimbursement rate was kept at \$0.50/mile.

The pastor's salary was kept at \$35,040, noting that health insurance premiums were increasing almost \$2000 for 2013. \$3000 of that

salary was designated as parsonage allowance for tax purposes.

The next quarterly meeting is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, April 21, after the service. The council plans to meet on Sunday, February 10, after the service.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

## Roof Project

This passed summer our insurance company assessed the hail damage to the roofs on the church, parsonage, and garage and wrote the church a check for \$12,099.63.



The church roof was nearing the end of its useful life span. No one was sure how long ago it was shingled. The roofs on the parsonage and garage are newer (the parsonage was re-shingled in 1998 and the garage was built in 1995). But the hail may have shortened their life-expectancy considerably.

In addition, if we complete the project by the insurance company's deadline this summer, they could give an additional reimbursement (maybe around \$5000) to cover some of the additional costs.

With those thoughts in mind, the voters approved replacing all three roofs.

After further discussion, the voters decided to go with metal shingles. This is **not** a tin roof, but decorative, sturdy, steal shingles which will look like regular shingles. But since they are metal, they last much longer, coming with a fifty year warranty.

We've received a bid from Jaeger Associates for about \$31,400.

How are we going to pay for it? We have the \$12,0000 from the insurance company and nearly \$3000 in the improvement fund. Some additional funding may also come from the insurance company as mentioned above. That leaves about \$10,000 to \$15,000.

As you look at your financial plans for this year, would you be able to help out? We still

need our members' regular contributions to the General Fund and Mission Offering, but if you are able to give over and above that, please consider designating it for the roof project. A special envelope is enclosed for that purpose, but you can use any envelope and just designate on it how much is going toward the roof.

Thank you for considering helping out. God has richly blessed us. It's amazing how each year our members step forward to keep the Lord's work going here at St. John's and around the world through the WELS.

## 2013 Church Council

Serving our Lord and his people as council members this year are:

- Justin Flaten, Chairman
- Doug Nelson, Secretary
- Gerald Hoffman, Treasurer
- Dick Lubenow, Elder
- Chad Rohloff, Elder
- Duane Hausmann, Trustee
- Chuck Nelson, Trustee

We pray that our Lord blesses them with wisdom in leading his people here at St. John's.

## Mission Festival

Mission Festival is February 17. Our guest preacher is Rev. Steven Staude. Gerald Hoffman and Kerry Roth heard him while they were visiting the WELS church in Yankton, SD, and highly recommend him. Please mark your calendars to attend. Rev. Staude's bio follows. The events for the day are:

\* **9:30 a.m. Presentation on WELS mission work in Africa.**

Rev. Staude's son-in-law, Pastor Rob Wendland, is a missionary in Malawi. Besides the usual pictures and stories of snakes, spiders and witch doctors, he'll show you the incredible response we get preaching the Gospel of our Savior Jesus. Missionary Wendland averages 12 baptisms every Sunday, and he had 22 baptisms on Easter Sunday! You won't want to miss this!



- \* **10:30 a.m. Mission festival service**
- \* **11:30 a.m. Mission festival potluck**

## Rev. Staude

**His Background:** Rev. Steve Staude was called to WELS Ministry of Christian Giving in 2008 after 34 years of serving congregations in MN, WI, IL, and FL. During that time he earned his doctorate and also served as the Second Vice President of the Western Wisconsin District. He has written Bible studies for Northwestern Publishing House and is a frequent contributor to Meditations. Steve serves the Dakota-Montana, Minnesota, Western Wisconsin, and Pacific Northwest Districts, specializing in current gifts which immediately fund WELS ministry.

Steve and his wife Ruth Ann live in Farmington, MN, and attend Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lakeville, MN. They have four grown children and nine grandchildren. During his leisure moments, Steve enjoys building grandfather clocks, hunting, and fishing.

**Why He Does What He Does:** Steve says, "Early in my ministry I buried a classmate of mine who was killed in a car accident. He left behind a young wife and two small children—and he did not have a will made out. It was a hassle for the widow and I felt helpless and sorry for her. That one incident made me determined to inform other couples, young and old, to 'get their house in order' as Isaiah told King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38).

"I have always admired the help and counsel which the synod's Christian giving counselors provided the people of my parishes over the years. Now the Lord has seen fit to allow me to work side by side with them."

## Email

A weekly schedule has been emailed for the past several weeks. If you haven't been getting it, that's because we don't have your email address. If you would like to receive the weekly schedule and other announcements via

email, please send your email address to: [hancocklutheran@gmail.com](mailto:hancocklutheran@gmail.com)

## Member Visits

Pastor Bitter aims to visit as many member homes as feasible in the next few months. He looks forward to hearing your thoughts and sharing God's word with you. If you would like a visit sooner rather than later, just give him a call.

## Cancellations

Cancellation of services will be announced on 1230 KMRS, Morris. Email announcements will also be sent to you if pastor has your email. If you would like a phone call to alert you of the cancellation, please let Pastor know.

## Lent

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 13. Lenten services are at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. We also plan to have a light supper beforehand. Pastor Bitter will be rotating with Pastor Main and Pastor Andrus.

The Lenten theme is *Names of Wondrous Love*. To bring home to our hearts the depth of our Savior's love and the greatness of his saving work for us, the Scriptures call him Jesus, Immanuel, the Truth, King, Christ crucified, the Way, the Lamb, the Alpha and Omega, and the Light. As the Scriptures fill our hearts and minds let's meditate on the truths these name teach.

## Matthew

Many of the events of Jesus' life are familiar to us from Sunday school and the church year. The Holy Spirit led Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to record select words and actions of our Savior and arrange them in a way to bring the Gospel deep into our hearts. Although each of the writers clearly point us to Jesus our Savior, the way each accomplishes this goal is special.

Starting March 3 we will be taking a ten-week overview of Matthew. Some of it will be

quite familiar. Some may offer new insights. All of it will touch our hearts, for these are the Spirit's words bringing us the wonder of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who came just as the Lord God in his merciful love had promised. Come, join us starting at 9:30 a.m., Sunday, February 24 and each week afterwards.

We will begin each session by watching a segment of the video, *The Visual Bible: Matthew*, followed by discussion. Here are the week-by-week sessions that we plan to do, God willing:

- Mar. 3: Matthew 1-4 – Seven Prophecies Fulfilled
- Mar. 10: Matthew 5-7 – The Sermon on the Mount: Wisdom for Christian Living (Sermon I)
- Mar. 17: Matthew 8, 9 – Ten Miracles
- Mar. 31: Matthew 10-12 – Mission Work (Sermon II) and Resistance
- Apr. 7: Matthew 13 – Seven Parables (Sermon III)
- Apr. 14: Matthew 14-17 – Faith and Unbelief Contrasted
- Apr. 21: Matthew 18 – True Greatness Forgives (Sermon IV)
- Apr. 28: Matthew 19-23 – Love's Last Calls for Repentance
- May 5: Matthew 24, 25 – Be Ready! The End Is Coming (Sermon V)
- May 12: Matthew 26-28 – The Climax: Jesus suffers, dies, and rises

## Trivia Question

The church building was constructed in 1906. Originally it was 32 feet long, 24 feet wide with sidewalls 10 feet high. Since then several additions have been made. Do you know what they were and when they were made?

Last issue's question: Music is an important part of our congregational life and worship. When did St. John's get its first organ?

Answer: In 1913 the congregation resolved to purchase its first reed organ. Before then, men were chosen who would lead the congregational singing. They were called *Vorsänger*.