

Gracelines

From Pastor Keith's Desk ...

In this extended period of our Epiphany season (January 6-February 22), I thought it would be helpful to explain some of the history and facts that pertain to this Christian traditional period. I hope it is as interesting and enlightening to read as it was to research and write.

January 6th is known in Christian tradition as *Epiphany*. It goes by other names in various church traditions. It is the 12th day of Christmas that we sing about and

sometimes is called *Twelfth Night*. In Latin culture it is known as *Three Kings' Day*. And in the Eastern churches it is known as the *Theophany*.

In traditional Christian churches Christmas, as well as Easter, is celebrated as a period of time; a season of the church year, rather than just a day. Christmas begins with the first Sunday of Advent, marked by expectation and anticipation, and concludes with Epiphany, which

looks ahead to the mission of the church to the world in light of the Nativity. The season of Epiphany extends from January 6th until Ash Wednesday, which begins the season of Lent leading to Easter.

The term *epiphany* means "to show" or "to make known" or even "to reveal." In Western churches it celebrates the coming of the wise men bringing gifts to visit the Christ child, who by so doing "reveal" Jesus to (Continued on Page Two)

Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational Meeting has been set for **Sunday, Jan. 22, 2012**, at **Noon in the Fellowship Hall**. The Annual Report will be made available begin-

ning the 2nd Sunday in January so you can review the information prior to the meeting.

If you are a member of Grace Lutheran, you are invited to vote for the

proposed budget and those who have agreed to serve on Council and other important boards/committees for 2012. Thank you for your attendance & participation.

Jan/Feb 2012



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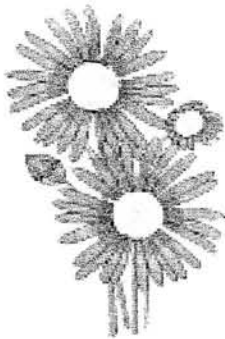
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From Pastor Keith's

Desk (Continued from Page One)

the world as Lord and King. In some Central and South American countries influenced by Catholic tradition, Three King's Day, or the night before, is the time for opening Christmas presents. In Eastern churches, the Theophany commemorates Jesus' baptism. In some churches the day is celebrated as Christmas, with Epiphany occurring on January 19.

As with most aspects of the Christian liturgical calendar,



2012 Flower Chart

There are many empty spots to reserve your "special" place on the calendar to help beautify our worship on Sundays. Please feel free to buy an arrangement or simply put one together from your garden. Sign up now to reserve your spot!

Epiphany has theological significance as a teaching tool in the church. The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the infant Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ. This act of worship by the Magi, which corresponded to Simeon's blessing that this child Jesus would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32), was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

The day is now observed as a time of focusing on the mission of the church in reaching others by "showing" Jesus as the Savior of all people. It's

Offering Envelopes

Offering envelopes for 2012 are now available to be picked up. They are located in the narthex and are in alphabetical order.

If you can't find yours, please let the church office know.

Thanks for using your envelopes and saving the church the cost of postage.

also a time of focusing on Christian brotherhood and fellowship, especially in healing the divisions of prejudice and bigotry that we all too often create between God's children.

Let us look for ways to "reveal" Jesus to the wider community we all live in this day and in the months ahead.

In Christian love,

Pastor Keith

Happy Birthday

JANUARY

- 2 Cheryl Carter
- Mattie Duggan
- 6 Jo Steinke
- 8 Colin Duggan
- 20 Paloma Michelsen
- 23 Debbie Coate

FEBRUARY

- 5 Ericka Boesel
- 6 Blaine Costello
- 8 Martin Michelsen
- Harold Wolf
- 17 Grace Rus
- 25 Bill Rus
- Debbie Winter
- 27 Eula Wolf
- 28 Walt Willcut



Sweet Violets (from Grandma Diane Pauli)

I have at times been amused by the rationale of non-believers for not taking Christ seriously. They seem put off by miracles, like the virgin birth — can't happen, they proclaim. But we are talking about God's actions here — He who created the universe, put the stars in their courses, He who transcends time and space — He can't make a woman pregnant?

Too often we try to make God fit into our own limited ideas, our own molds, putting Him into a box that we can understand. We need to let God be God. He is beyond our understanding — that's OK. "It is the essence of faith to let God be God."

Oh, I know, we have made a lot of progress in science and technology, being the smart cookies that we are. But as I age I become more aware of what I don't know. There will always be questions we can't answer, especially the "why" and "what for?" questions. It's OK. God is God (thank God) and angels are angels and we are human beings. And we need to be the people God created us to be. We need to seek after him, to be grateful to Him, to love Him with all our hearts and to love others as ourselves. That's our assignment. It's not always easy, but He has given us His Holy Spirit to help us. Thank you, Father.

Flood Buckets (by Ardis Willcut)

It's been three months since we delivered 30 flood buckets to the disaster center in Little Rock, AR, but we thought there might still be some interest in this project. Walt and I felt very privileged to be the ones to represent you in this effort and we want to thank you very much for your donations.

When we arrived at the Ferncliff Center, we were a little concerned that our 30 buckets wouldn't make a whole lot of difference but we were assured by the young man who met us at the gate (he was the Assistant Director of the Center) that they were really grateful for any amount since they had shipped out 792 buckets earlier in the week and their supply was running low. So we unloaded our buckets on the dock and were told we could wander around the site as much as we wanted which, of course, we did.

The Ferncliff Center is located in a beautiful area about 10 miles west of Little Rock. It is run by the Presbyterian Church as a camp and conference center.

Several years ago they recognized a need for a disaster center and applied for a grant. The warehouse pictured here is the result.

One of the more unconventional buildings there has no outside walls, a beautiful fireplace inside, and is used as a meeting room.

Again, thank you very much for your support.



From the pen of Charles Spurgeon:

This morning I wish to remind you of the importance of praying for ministers of the gospel. Our verse today is a fervent request from the apostle Paul — one which I echo and implore every Christian household to observe today — **Pray for us.** (1 Thessalonians 5:25)

Christian brothers and sisters, a minister's work is solemn and momentous involving spiritual wellness or woe to thousands, for we "treat" souls for God, dealing in His eternal business, and our words are "the fragrance of life" to some or "the smell of death" (2 Cor. 2:16) to others. A very heavy responsibility rests upon us and it will be no small mercy if we are ultimately found "innocent of the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). As officers in Christ's army, we are a special target of the hatred of men and demons, for they carefully watch for any slip on our part and work diligently to make us stumble.

Our calling brings with it temptations from which others are exempt, and that calling all too often draws us away from our personal enjoyment of God's truth and into a ministerial and official consideration of it instead. We deal with many complicated situations, sometimes coming to our wits' end or becoming confused ourselves. We observe very sad episodes of backsliding among our people, wounding our hearts; and we see millions perishing without the gospel, and our spirits sink as a result. We desire that you would profit from our preaching, that we would be a blessing to your children, and that we would be useful to saints and sinners alike for many years to come.

Therefore, dear friends, intercede for us with God. We would be miserable indeed without the help of your prayers, but are happy when we know of your intercession for us. Although you do not look to us, but to our Master, for spiritual blessings, consider how often He has given those blessings through His ministers. Pray again and again that we may be the earthen vessels into whom the Lord may place the treasure of the gospel. We — the entirety of ministers, missionaries evangelists, and Bible students — implore you in the name of Jesus:

"Pray for us!"

From the pen of Jim Reimann:

The calling to be a minister is a special blessing, but it can often be frustrating. Many ministers become discouraged due to the lack of spiritual growth they see in people. We can only imagine how Jeremiah must have felt when the Lord told him, "When you tell them all this, they will not listen to you; when you call to them, they will not answer" (Jer.7:27). And the people themselves were amazingly bold in their defiance, for they told Jeremiah, "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord" (Jer. 44:16).

Paul even asked, "Who is equal to such a task?" (2 Cor. 2:16). Yet he went on to say, "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God" (2 Cor. 2:17).

With so many preaching for personal gain today, those ministers speaking "with sincerity" need our prayers more than ever. Why not take time this morning to pray for the ministers who have given of themselves to you?

Hymn Story

Hymn: **O God, Our Help in Ages Past**

Isaac Watts, 1674—1748

Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God.
(Psalm 90:1,2)

It has been wisely said that no thinking person ever regarded the beginning of a new year with indifference. Each of us faces many concerns and questions as we stand on the threshold of the unknown future.

The mystery of time is the subject of this hymn text, a paraphrase of Psalm 90. The hymn is considered by many to be one of the finest ever written and perhaps the best known of the 600 hymns by Isaac Watts, often called the “father of English hymnody.”

At an early age Isaac displayed unusual talent in writing poetic verse. As a young man he became increasingly concerned with the congregational singing in the English speaking churches. Only ponderous metrical psalms were used until this time. To use any words other than the actual words of Scripture would have been considered an insult to God.

Challenged by his father to “write something better for us to sing,” young Watts began to create new

versions of the psalms with inspiring and expressive style. Eventually, at the early age of 25, he published an important hymnal titled *The Psalms of David in the Language of the New Testament*. In addition to “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” several of Watts’ other paraphrases based on psalm settings are hymn texts still widely sung today. They include such favorites as “Joy to the World,” Psalm 98; and “Jesus Shall Reign,” Psalm 72.

After more than 250 years, Isaac Watts’ hymn is still a timely reminder of God’s faithfulness throughout the past and His sure promises for our future.

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.

“Under the shadow of Thy throne still may we dwell secure; sufficient is Thine arm alone, and our defense is sure.

“Before the hills in order stood or earth received her frame, from everlasting Thou art God, to endless years the same.

“Time, like an ever rolling stream, bears all its sons away; they fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, be Thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home.”

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Live confidently in the assurance that the One who has directed your steps to this moment of time is worthy of your complete trust for the days ahead.