

OUR SAVIOR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL
ANNOUNCEMENTS — 3 JANUARY A.D. 2016

✠ **CALENDAR** ✠

3 January to 10 January A.D. 2016

TODAY

Divine Services **8:30 & 11:00 A.M.**
Sunday School & Bible Study 10:00 A.M.

THIS WEEK

MONDAY

Office of Matins **8:10 A.M.**
Lutheran Confessions Study 8:45 A.M.
School Board Meeting 6:30 P.M.

TUESDAY

Adult Volleyball (Gymnasium) 7:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY

Epiphany Divine Service **7:00 P.M.**

THURSDAY

Responsive Prayer **8:10 A.M.**
Women's LifeLight Bible Study 1:30 P.M.
Cantate Choir Rehearsal 7:00 P.M.
Brass Ensemble Rehearsal 8:30 P.M.

SUNDAY, 10 January

Divine Services **8:30 & 11:00 A.M.**
Sunday School & Bible Study 10:00 A.M.
Board of Christian Ed Meeting 12:30 P.M.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT BIBLE STUDIES:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SAINT MATTHEW with Pastor Thoma leading the discussion. This has proven to be a lively study full of great discussion. You are encouraged to join to see for yourself! The study group meets in the ECC entrance room, and God willing, starts right at 10 a.m.

HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH — Mr. Ted Nichols continues to lead this wonderful study of John T. Pless' delightful book on Law and Gospel. The group meets in the cafeteria at 10:00 a.m. Check it out!

FROM THE KANTOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR IN THE LORD! With the new calendar year comes a 'restart' of music ensemble scheduling and a wonderful time to jump in and become involved. New voices are always welcome in Cantate (Adult vocal choir). The next rehearsal is this Thursday, January 7, at 7:00 p.m. We still have a particular need for willing volunteers to ring handbells with the Celebration Ringers (Adult handbell ensemble) - up to four new ringers are welcome!! The next rehearsal is Wednesday, January 13, at 7:30 p.m. Please speak with me prior to the 13th, however, so I can get you caught up and comfortable with the basic technique of ringing the bells and reading the music. God grant this, Amen!

ALSO, IN THIS EDITION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENTS, you will find an article I wrote for the Blog found on the website lutheranreformation.org. This website is dedicated to getting Lutherans excited about the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The Blog is designed to be read by lay-persons of the Church and meant to educate on a wide variety of topics that in some way relate to the Lutheran Reformation. I hope you enjoy and take advantage of this great resource of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod!

SUNDAY SCHOOL: Join us this week for Sunday School. A reminder for families with younger students, please be sure to drop them off and pick them up in their room. The following is your child's teacher and room numbers:

- Preschool—Room 212—**Sue Kelly, Alexis Ripke
- Grades K & 1—Room 215—**Joyce Hicks & Rachel Bronsberg
- Grades 2 & 3—Room 219—**Mia Chapman
- Grades 4 & 5—Room 203—**Bill & Ruth Libby & Janel Gryc
- Grades 6 & 7—Room 205—**Emily Helmreich
- Grade 8—Room 206—**Donna Hay



The Week of The Epiphany

Festival of the Epiphany Divine Service
Wednesday, 6 January 2016 @ 7:00 p.m.

JR. AND SR. YOUTH GROUPS UPDATE

A lot has happened in a short period of time. The Youth Board has met together twice this month with Pastor Thoma in order to begin retooling its efforts to serve the youth. A basic philosophy was formulated and discussed, goals were identified, and initial plans were set into motion to start reaching those goals.

Highlights include...

- knowing who our prospective youth actually are,
- having an Adult/youth leadership support structure in place to call and talk with the youth personally about events, activities, life in general,
- understanding that church attendance for our youth is paramount, and yet this typically translates to youth group participation.
- providing more opportunities to connect with the life of the congregation.

Some things to watch for...

Over the course the upcoming year, the Youth Board will spend a good deal of its time providing opportunities for building sturdy relationships among the core youth members. This effort will be mostly activity driven — that is, the efforts will consist of providing activities considered of high interest to the youth (i.e. paintball, overnight Cedar Point trips, overnight Base Camp events, and the like); the events will be provided free of charge to attendees and any invited friends. Also, more of the youth will be brought into service duties — acolytes, crucifers, lectors, ushering, altar guild, etc. Lastly, an international Youth in Mission trip is being prepared for the summer of 2017. This, of course, depends somewhat on the international climate. Nevertheless, our eyes are once again set upon serving in Lithuania/Latvia by helping the church there to further outreach efforts to area youth and families. Serving American soldiers and their families stationed in England with VBS style camps is also a possibility. Ideas, to be sure. Wonderful opportunities for our youth, most definitively!

More news to come!

Week of 4 January to 10 January

BIRTHDAYS

Caleb Mrozek	1/5	Skyler Schulte	1/9
Claudia Trapp	1/7	Ryan Butsavich	1/10
Benjamin Hajciar	1/9	Ethan Reynolds	1/10
Joyce Packard	1/9		

IT IS TIME ONCE AGAIN TO RENEW LUTHERAN WITNESS SUBSCRIPTIONS. The subscription rate for 2016 is \$ 9.72. Please submit your subscription payment to the church office or with your Sunday offering. All payments must be received in the office by **Sunday , January 17th.** Thank You.

✠ PRAYERS ✠

THE SICK, THE SHUT-INS, THOSE IN ADVERSITY: Bill and Lori Adrain, Adrian Atkinson, Raleigh Bahr, Ingeborg Bailey, Jack & Barbara Bain, Jack Bartenbaker, Wendell Bergren, Christopher Bolton, Susan Brandt, Wendell Bergren, Sylvia Cole, Sarah Condra, Carole Doll, Jim Faught, Carol Ford, Bill Kirkpatrick, Landon Martens, Leah Nelson, Cindy Pushman, Josephina Renard, The Shirk family, Donna Talsma, Randi Talsma, Edwin Thoma, Jennifer Thoma, Monica Tkac, Joan Thompson, Susan Vogt, Ed Willer, Rev. John Wurst, Frances Wyckoff, and Randy Zeilinger.

MILITARY: Ramone Baca, Alexander Baloh, Drew Barber, Brandy Bates, Robert Bell, Corry Brennan, Tom Buller, Brian Chapman, Mark Ciero, Jonathan Cross, Kenneth Eyer, Darrel Fenbert Jr., Drew Helmreich, Randy Horst, Chad Libby, Neil Lipon, Richard McManamon, Nick Morley, Jonathan Mrozek, Matthew Niendorf, Jacob Przywara, Chris Robosky, Steve Roeske, Samantha Russell, Jake Simkins, Albie Therrien, and Alex Young.

MISSIONARIES: Rev. Charles Ferry and family.

“FROM HEAVEN ABOVE TO EARTH I COME”

With the vast wealth of hymns available to enhance our celebrations of the Christmas season each year, it is difficult to discern which hymns to select and when to stop selecting! If the church musician of your congregation is anything like me, they will find a way to creatively incorporate as many as possible. While it may be difficult to finalize and stop selecting hymns for your season, perhaps a place to start is with Martin Luther’s Christmas gem, “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (LSB 358). It most certainly should not be dismissed as “the hymn that has fifteen stanzas!” At my congregation this season, we will be using stanzas 1-7 of this hymn on Christmas Eve, stanzas 8-12 on the First Sunday after Christmas, and stanzas 13-15 on the Second Sunday after Christmas. There are also creative ways this hymn can be presented within the same service, even by singing all fifteen stanzas consecutively. It is not my recommendation to say: “Okay everybody, we are going to sing ALL fifteen stanzas ALL together. Ready, go!”

As with some of Luther’s other hymns, “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” is in part derived from a popular song of his day—in this case a singing game. In *Liturgy and Hymns* (volume LIII of *Luther’s Works*), Ulrich Siegfried Leupold (editor) notes that the first stanza is based on an old garland song refrain that was sung by a young man before giving out a riddle to one of the girls in the circle. If she could not solve the riddle she had to give the singer her wreath or garland. In *The Roots of German Hymnody*, Konrad Ameln provides the German text of both the original garland song and Luther’s first stanza. It is interesting to compare Leupold’s translation of the garland song (left) with Catherine Winkworth’s translation of Luther (right):

Good news from far abroad I bring
Glad tidings for you all I sing,
I bring so much you’d like to know,
Much more than I shall tell you though.

“From heaven above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev’ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing.” (public domain)

This is the first of five stanzas that Luther penned as the angel’s proclamation of the joyful words of the wondrous news of Jesus’ birth. A note accompanying the hymn in *Lutheran Service Book* further enlightens: “The remaining stanzas declare the response of the shepherds and the meaning of the Savior’s birth for all the world.” The hymn was written for Luther’s family celebration of Christmas Eve and was first printed Joseph Klug’s *Geistliche Lieder* in Wittenberg in 1535.

I admire the beauty and clarity of the English translation; however, I must admit the first phrase of stanza eleven, “Instead of soft and silken stuff You have but hay and straw so rough” makes me chuckle a little. I have not tried, but am willing to say it would be quite a difficult task to find the word “stuff” used in any other hymn. If I was preparing the translation, I would have worked hard to stay faithful to the original language while finding a different choice of vocabulary in this instance. Yet, the more I try to draft an alternative to the first phrase and a second phrase to match the rhyme scheme, the more I realize this task is easier said than done! Here are a couple of my meager efforts for your amusement:

Without rare soft and silken cloth,
You lay on straw inside a trough.

Not velvets soft or silken things,
It’s hay and straw for You they bring.

Originally sung to a folk song melody, the tune now married with “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” is VOM HIMMEL HOCH, as found in Valentin Schumann’s *Geistliche Lieder aufs new gebessert und gemehrt* published in Leipzig in 1539, and believed to have been written by Luther himself. Numerous instrumental and choral settings of the text and tune exist and are worthy of seeking out. Perhaps most famously, J.S. Bach used the tune in his *Christmas Oratorio* and several independent works for organ.

I pray that you will find a new appreciation for this wonderful Christmas hymn and an even greater joy in the good news and purpose for which the angel declared, “From heaven above to earth I come.” From heaven above to earth came JESUS, the Word made Flesh, the Savior of the world!

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