

The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, IL 60546 708-442-5250

"Together in Worship and Serving in Faith"

Rev. Dennis J. Lauritsen, Pastor
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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January, 2011

Issue 1

"We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope, as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world."

IMAGES OF THE SEASON—EPIPHANY

Along with Easter and Pentecost, the festival of the Epiphany was one of the early church's most important festivals. Its significance is surprising when we realize that today most North American congregations observe the festival of the Epiphany with little of the fanfare that we associate with Christmas, Easter, or even Pentecost. One of the reasons is that the feast of the Epiphany has a complex history. The season that follows it features biblical events and theological realities that are more subtle than the dramatic raising of a man from the dead, for instance, or an invasion by the Spirit through wind, flame, and tongues. Why was the Epiphany such an important festival in the early centuries of the church?

The festival originated in the East, where it was celebrated from the third century as a commemoration of the Lord's baptism. Later on it came to include an observance of the nativity as well. The festival was introduced into the West in the fourth century as an observance of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles in the persons of the magi; it was not an observance of the Lord's baptism. No matter which of these three events from the life of Jesus was observed on the Epiphany, the common theme was the appearance of God in the world in one form or another.

Notice that the church designates the Sundays that follow Epiphany as Sundays *after* the Epiphany. By contrast, the Sundays in Lent are identified as Sundays *in* Lent, and the Sundays following Easter are designated as the Sundays *of* Easter. Epiphany is not a season in the same way that Lent is. And Easter, the day of all days, is not so much a season as it is a day that lasts fifty days, Pentecost being the culmination of that day. These distinctions help the church to maintain the relative importance of these three liturgical periods.

In the churches of the West today, the Epiphany is the observance on January 6 of the manifestation of Christ to all the nations of the world, which the gospel represents in the persons of the magi who found Jesus in Bethlehem. In this liturgical year the festival occurs on a Saturday. In the Sundays that follow, we see his glory revealed at a river, a wedding, in a synagogue, beside a lake, on a plain, and on a mountain.

What these scriptural images and stories have to say to us, in the end, is that if we look with discerning eye and listen with discriminating ear, we can perceive God behind, above, within, around, and below the world all about us. We can contemplate an infant lying in a manger, for instance, and have a vision of God.

When we approach all of creation this way, we find it more difficult to abuse our environment, to treat it casually, to hoard it, or to use it in destructive ways. Living responsibly in the world then

becomes less a question of merely doing good and avoiding evil, less a question of moral imperatives or obeying the Ten Commandments, and more an active partnership with God in transfiguring creation until it becomes a place increasingly fit for the kingdom.

For these reasons and many others, Epiphany and the Sundays that follow are critical occasions for the church to address the secularization of society and the world, giving answer to, or at least declaring solidarity with, those who struggle with lingering doubts about the reality of God in our troubled, violent world. Is God important in the world or not? Can we see any real evidence in the life of the average person around us that God really matters?

Certainly the average unchurched person is capable of living a completely secular life that is at once good, socially responsible, generous, and loving. At its most obvious, the world is truly a satisfying place to be. We can take it seriously and manage to live a life that appears rich and full, even without "interference" from God. What does the church have to say to those who dismiss the practice of religion as irrelevant to a life lived well in this modern, high-tech world of ours?

The church's answer is that behind the evidence of things seen, there lurks evidence of things unseen. A recovery of Epiphany would sharpen our eyesight, attune our ears, indeed develop all our senses, so that we are receptive to the glimpses of God's glory all around us. Can we, even at our frantic pace, capture a craving for that glory, freshen our yearning for incomprehensible light and incomparable music?

—continued on the next page . . .

Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15 a.m. - Service of the Word (Slovak)
9:00 a.m. - Christian Education and Children's Choir
9:45 a.m. - Adult Choir Rehearsal
10:15 a.m. - Liturgy of Holy Communion (English)

Choir Rehearsals

Wednesdays, January 12th, 19th, and 26th at 7:30 p.m.

Annual Congregational Meeting and Luncheon

Sunday, January 30th, 2011

Meeting and luncheon follow 10:15 a.m. liturgy.
(No 8:15 a.m. service)

Or have commerce and entertainment so deadened us to the subtle reality of God hidden behind the appearance of things that the appearances themselves suffice?

This kind of sensual deadness has no place among a eucharistic people who claim that words uttered, bread broken, and wine poured out have a meaning far beyond the mere words, the mere bread and wine. The word preached and the eucharist shared are, after all, the church's greatest assurance that the material world holds more than our senses at first tell us. The words we hear, are they now the very Word of God made flesh? And the bread and wine we share, are they not a communion in the body and blood of Christ? These material things, are they not transfigured for us in faith when two or three of us gather in Jesus' name?

And what do we say we believe? In the Nicene Creed we describe Christ as light from light. In the evening we identify Christ as the light that dispels our darkness. The prayer for the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany says, "Almighty God, you sent your only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear." When the prophet Simeon took the infant Jesus in his arms, what he saw, at last, was his salvation revealed.

Physicists say that if you strike clay with a hammer and look at it with a low-level infrared camera, you will see that it emits light. Quantum physics has led some scientists to believe that one day, everything will exist in the form of light. Some of the world's great luminaries, spending solitary time in deserts or canyons, have beheld an illuminated earth. Who has not heard music when a crystal goblet is tapped?

As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote:
The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.

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Official Pastoral Rites. . .

Baptisms:

Henry Lawrence, son of Jeff and Mary Quest, was baptized on November 21st. Henry's sponsors are Daniel Quest and Amy LaPorte.

Jason Edward, son of Edward and Denise Kowalewicz, was baptized on November 28th. Jason's sponsors are Laurie Klaczynski and Kenny Arcivar.

**The deadline for articles for the February, 2011
issue of the congregational newsletter
is Sunday, January 9th.
Thank you for being prompt!**

From the Stewardship Committee. . .

Gratitude

In the book, *The Gift of Thanks: The Roots and Rituals of Gratitude*, author Margaret Visser notes that in the Japanese culture a recipient of a gift will occasionally accept it not with a "Thank you," but will instead offer something along the lines of "I'm sorry." The implication is that the recipient feels such a sense of indebtedness to the giver that they will never be able to repay them.

Sometimes I think people feel this way about offerings of their money, time and talents to the church. We have been taught that everything we have is a gift from a loving God. Perhaps we feel such a sense of indebtedness to God for what we have been given that we don't feel worthy enough to receive the gifts. So, like the third servant in the Parable of the Talents, who buried his talent, we take every precaution not to lose these gifts.

Of course, this is not the message Jesus was preaching when he told this parable. He wanted his followers to use their talents to the best of their ability to spread God's Word, like the first two servants in the parable did. The first two servants took their talents, used them, and increased their worth. And what happened to these servants? They were given more responsibility; we are told they were put in charge of many things. And they were also given the opportunity to share in their master's happiness! But the servant who did not use their talent was chastised by the master and their talent was taken away.

Now despite what some economists say about a recovery, we are still in a time of economic uncertainty. Perhaps your household has been adversely affected or you know a family that has been affected. Our church has been affected as well. It is hard to think about giving (or giving more) during difficult circumstances. It is also hard to feel a sense of gratitude during these times. But I was recently reading an article written by Mollie Ziegler Hemingway which I recently shared with the Stewardship Committee. In the article, Hemingway talks about German pastor Martin Rinckart. Rinckart served a town that became a refuge for political and military fugitives during the Thirty Years War. The situation was bad even before the Black Plague arrived in 1637. One pastor fled. Rinckart buried another two on the same day. The only pastor remaining, he conducted funeral services for as many as 50 people a day and 4,480 within one year. Yet Rinckart is best known for writing, in the midst of the war, the great hymn that triumphantly proclaims this:

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

Hemingway also noted in the article that the Roman philosopher Cicero was on to something when he said, "Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others." It is also the basic Christian attitude. Paul tells the Thessalonians to "give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

So, when you tally up all the gifts God has given you out of His love, make the effort to use them, not out of a spirit of obligation or indebtedness, but out of a spirit of gratitude and love. For it was Mother Teresa of India who once said, "It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving."

—by Charles Matthies



Join us on
Sunday, January 30th, 2011

10:15 a.m. Liturgy of Holy Communion
(no 8:15 a.m. service)

followed by the

Annual Congregational Meeting and Luncheon

Chairpersons and all committees and organizations of the congregation are reminded to submit your annual reports to the church office by Sunday, January 9th.

Reports will be available to the congregation on Sunday, January 23rd.

January Happenings

Slovak Athletic Association Meeting

Wednesday, January 12th, 1 p.m.

Ladies Altar Guild

Thursday, January 13th, 12 noon

Church Council Meeting

Thursday, January 13th, 7:30 p.m.

Missions and Outreach Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 18th, 7 p.m.

Myjovsky Group Meeting

Thursday, January 20th, 12 noon

Dorcas Society Meeting

Tuesday, January 25th, 12 noon

Finance Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 25th, 7:15 p.m.

CODA (Co-Dependents Anonymous) meets weekly on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the Friendship Room.

AA Group meets weekly on Saturday evenings at 7 p.m. in the Friendship Room.

Legends of the Game Volleyball meets every other Monday, 6:30-9:15 p.m. beginning January 3rd through April 25th.

JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

A poem by T. S. Eliot about his own journey from agnosticism to faith; he wrote it around the time of his baptism and acceptance into the Anglican Church in 1927.



'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For the journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins,
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death,
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

—submitted by Pastor Lauritsen

Worship and Music News . . .

The Worship and Music Committee, along with the entire congregation, wishes to thank everyone who participated and provided leadership for the Christmas services to help make them worshipful, joyful and meaningful occasions. Special thanks to our Sunday School leaders, families and children who staged the Annual Christmas Pageant on December 19th as we began to celebrate the Christmas season.

We also would like to thank the "hospitality crew" who set up and hosted the reception following the afternoon Vespers Service on Sunday, December 12th, and to Kristine Boike and the Young Musicians of Riverside for their pre-service recital.

We are also grateful to all our music sponsors for the support they provided for the Christmas Eve musical presentation, *Candles and Carols: A Service of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*.

—Charles Matthies, Worship and Music Committee

January announcements. . .

- ★ The 2011 offering envelopes are ready for pick up in the lower hallway off the dining hall. Please pick up envelopes for friends or relatives. If you would like to have your envelopes mailed to you, please contact Karen in the church office.
- ★ Financial donations made to the congregation must be received in the church office no later than December 30th in order to be included in your end of the year financial statement.
- ★ A reminder to the congregation, especially during these months of inclement weather, that complimentary cab service is available on Sunday mornings for rides to and from worship services. Please contact Blue Village Cab Company at (708) 583-6900 as early as possible to make arrangements for pick-up. When arranging your pick-up, please tell the dispatcher that the ride is to be billed to account number #101755.
- ★ The 2011 calendars from Hitzeman Funeral Home have been delivered and are available at both entrances to the sanctuary and on tables in the dining hall. Please take a copy for yourself and a neighbor.
- ★ If you will be leaving the Chicago area during the winter months for warmer climates, please notify the church office before then so the monthly newsletter can be forwarded to your temporary residence or cancelled until you return. The congregation incurs a fee for each newsletter that is undeliverable; stopped mail delivery to your permanent residence is considered undeliverable and returned to the church. Thank you for your assistance.

Our thanks. . .

Thank you to Lavinia Myers and Ramona Suffern with members of the Missions and Outreach Committee for coordinating our congregational holiday giving to Lutheran Child and Family Services and to the Riverside Food Pantry.

JANUARY

Jan. 1	Steve Michael	Jan. 19	Sheryl Hallmann
Jan. 4	Suzanna Skudrna Ramona Suffern	Jan. 20	William Boor Emil Galandak
Jan. 6	Esther Meksto Emil Mendel	Jan. 21	Joan Mikulina
Jan. 8	Samuel Lauritsen	Jan. 22	Trevor Jech Kenneth Kostelancik
Jan. 9	George Waldman Olga Zavodny	Jan. 25	Mildred Riban Emily Kostial
Jan. 10	George Halas Joyce Hodul	Jan. 27	Mildred Melka
Jan. 14	Thomas Michaels	Jan. 29	Ethel Tybitancil
Jan. 15	Sarah Gavac	Jan. 31	Leslie Byrne Rachel Decosola
Jan. 16	Arlene Antonovits		
Jan. 18	John Galdun Lenka Mezera		



January 26, 1952 - George and Susan Waldman



Dorcas Society News. . .

Dear Friends,

Our "Post-Holiday" party plans have not been finalized and will be discussed at our next regular meeting on Tuesday, January 25th at 12 noon. Why not start the new year by joining us?

Wishing you a blessed and healthy new year.

—Emily Kostelancik

We receive thanks. . .

November 27th, 2010

Dear Pastor Lauritsen and Congregation,

Thank you for your gracious hospitality! We very much appreciate the use of your church apartment for our weekend visit to Chicago. It is spacious and very comfortable.

We visited the Museum of Science and Industry, Millennium Park, Giordano's, and the Willis Tower.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dennis, Lauren, Becky and Ben Stroh,
from Dr. Martin Luther Church, Muskegon, Michigan

The food and monetary donations for the Riverside Township Food Pantry were amazing. The congregation at Sts. Peter and Paul gathered over five hundred items; Jane Lauritsen, with Ames School, collected nearly as many canned items; and the “Lionel Road Families” donated fourteen grocery bags. Wow! All the food and monetary gifts were delivered to the Riverside Township Food Pantry and were received with heartfelt gratitude. The success of this project was overwhelming, and it is an example for all of us to continue along the path that our Lord has offered us for helping others in need. Thank you for your generous participation; and may our Lord continue to bless you.

Thanks also to the Sunday school children, Vicki Michaels and Iveta Boyanchek for creating the wonderful decorations for the “Trim-a-Tree” in Centennial Park of Riverside. Riverside Foods sponsored the tree which was decorated with the ornaments on Saturday, November 27th. Thanks again for your participation in this Riverside community event.

—*Ramona Suffern, Missions and Outreach Committee*

The Community Life Committee (CLC) would like to thank you for your donations to the campaign, “Your Change can Change a Child’s Life.” Your spare change in our collection jar raised \$105. Together with the CLC’s donation, the Illinois Masonic Children’s Homes will receive a check for \$150 to help care for children facing abuse, abandonment and neglect; those suffering from depression and family difficulties; and those faced with poverty, among other issues. Thank you again for your participation, and may we together continue to serve our Lord during this blessed Christmas season.

—*Ann Pennino, CLC Co-chair*

1. Numbers 6:22-17 - The Name of Jesus
2. **John 1:1-18 - Second Sunday of Christmas**
3. Genesis 28:10-22 - Accountability
4. Exodus 3:1-5 - Holy Ground
5. Isaiah 42:1-9 - Text messages
6. Matthew 2:1-12 - Epiphany
7. Psalm 29 - Storm watch
8. Acts 10:34-43 - United in Christ
9. **Matthew 3:13-17 - Baptism of the Lord**
10. Genesis 35:1-15 - Name changing
11. Jeremiah 1:4-10 - Encouraging words
12. Matthew 12:15-21 - Encouraging hope
13. Isaiah 49:1-7 - Service call
14. Psalm 40:1-11 - Faithful testimony
15. 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 - True calling
16. **John 1:29-42 - Second Sunday after the Epiphany**
17. Acts 8:26-40 - Active learning
18. Acts 4:8-13 - Off to see the wizard!
19. 1 Samuel 1:1-20 - Give it to God
20. Isaiah 9:1-4 - 1967
21. Psalm 27:1, 4-9 - Larger than life
22. 1 Corinthians 1:10-18 - You can do it!
23. **Matthew 4:12-23 - Third Sunday after the Epiphany**
24. Judges 6:11-24 - Going it alone
25. Acts 9:1-22 - An amazing journey
26. Judges 7:12-22 - Lethal weapons
27. Micah 6:1-8 - Storytelling
28. Psalm 15 - On the holy hill
29. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 - Yes, Jesus loves me
30. **Matthew 5:1-12 - Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany**
31. Philemon 1-25 - A place to stand



**Just a
Reminder...**

Remember to patronize J. C. Georges Restaurant in Countryside and 10% of our congregation’s dining bill will be given back to Sts. Peter and Paul each month. Extra discount dining cards may be obtained in the dining hall or from Karen in the church office. Thank you. And thank you to George’s Restaurant for so many years of support.



November, 2010



Attendance and Offering Report

Weekly Offering Needed for Budget: \$5,961.54

<u>Date</u>	<u>Weekly Attendance</u>	<u>Plate Offering</u>	<u>Other Receipts*</u>
11/7	142	\$4,769.25	\$ 1,755.00
11/14	97	\$2,999.00	\$ 50.00
11/21	108	\$3,077.00	\$ 21.20
11/28	128	\$3,972.00	\$ 1,564.00

*Includes memorials, tuition, flowers, etc.

November, 2010 average attendance: 119
November, 2009 average attendance: 100

Altar Flowers

Nov. 28th: In celebration of dear husband Milan's 85th birthday on November 25th by loving wife Olga Zavodny.

In loving memory of beloved mother and grandmother +Anna Stastny+ on the 25th anniversary of her death by remembering daughter Audrey Bucz and her family, the Cox and Hanzel families, and dearest granddaughter Adrienne Gana.

Dec. 5th: In loving memory of mother +Anna Slahor+ on the anniversary of her birth and 19th anniversary of her death by remembering children and family, John and Joanne Slahor and Donald and Shirley Babyar.

In memory of husband +David Patula+ by loving wife Charlene. *"I'm everything I am because you loved me."*

Dec. 19th: In loving memory of beloved mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and great-great-grandmother +Mary Riban+ on the ninth anniversary of her death on December 29th, 2001 by remembering children Mildred Riban and Mike Riban, Jr. and Family.

In memory of +William Boor+ on the eighth anniversary of his death by remembering family Irene, William R., Richard T., Debbie, Brian and Michael Boor.



The Burning Temples

A Sermon for the 25th Sunday after Pentecost,

November 14th, 2010

Haggai 2:9; Isaiah 65:17-25 and Luke 21:5-19

“The future splendor of this Temple will be greater than that of former times,” the Lord who rules over all declares, “and in this place I will give peace.” These are great words of hope from the little prophet Haggai, words of hope for exiles who had returned from Babylon late in the sixth century BC, returning to a Temple in rubble, a Jerusalem in ruins, and with little cause for hope after at least five decades of being away. Nonetheless, the prophet preaches that “The latter splendor . . . shall be greater than the former. . . and in Jerusalem I will give peace.” “. . . And in *yerushalayim* I will give *shalom*.”

To those same exiles, most of whom had never seen Jerusalem, the LORD announces through the prophet Isaiah, “. . . Look, I am ready to create new heavens and a new earth! The former ones will not be remembered; no one will think about them anymore. But be happy and rejoice forevermore over what I am about to create!”

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” That’s the way we have learned it; but try it this way, “In the beginning God *began* to create the heavens and the earth.” God does not simply finish off creation once and for all, then leave it for eternity, but God begins and continues, as Isaiah sees it, to ‘create new heavens and a new earth.’”

“What we need around this church is something new.” I’ve been hearing it now for decades from people who have been ransacked by the ravages of time and washed ashore by the stormy tides of change. “We need some new program,” we say to each other, “We need some new attraction that will grab the attention of others; some new spirit, some new music, some new publicity, some new technology, anything, anything new, new, I say.” You see, we’ve tried the old solutions, the former strategies, the previous programs. It seems we’ve tried everything; and, you know what, none of them seems to change much of anything. The walls of Jerusalem and the glory of the Temple seem to lay there in a heap just as they did for decades after the exiles’ return. So, we need something fresh, we say, something not yet thought of, we think, something brand new.

Why? Well, maybe because all of us are in a fix of some sort or another. We continue to do the same old things the same way, being drawn into the same old habits that have dominated us for years, unable to bring about the change that we so desperately need. In one way or another, we’re all in a fix, like the mythical Sisyphus whose punishment is to spend every day trying to roll an immense boulder to the top of a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this task every day throughout eternity. You may remember that Sisyphus received this punishment because of his proud belief that he was smarter than Zeus, the god of the Greek pantheon. “Well, Sisyphus,” the story seems to suggest, “if you think you’re so much smarter than Zeus, then go ahead, try to do it yourself.”

We come home from exile in Babylon, expecting to see the glorious past, expecting to regain our identity, but all we see is the rubble of the past. The past is long gone and there appears to be no future. Even though we’re home from Babylon, we’re still in exile. Tomorrow we’ll again start rolling the boulder to the top of the hill. Everything, it seems, is in a fix.

Even the nightly news is in a fix. I’d like to know what’s so new about the same old thing? So, many of us have simply given up on the news. Just couldn’t take it anymore: piling on one impossible situation after another, drubbing us with one disastrous tragedy after another. Who needs it, especially every night at 10 o’clock? What we need to hear is something that is really new, something besides standing there watching the same old boulder rolling back down the hill every day. And please don’t tell me about the latest thing in the “self-help” section at your local Borders bookstore. Sure, it may offer some help, some relief from whatever ails us, but for me, it just doesn’t go far enough, not deep enough, not radical enough, not new enough. And I’m sorry, “Dr. Phil,” but I just don’t agree that “Only you can cure what is wrong with you.” Maybe a little bit, maybe some of the time, but not very much, especially when it comes to the fixes that I’m in that I am just not able to fix.

Let’s admit it, we are creatures of habit. We are stuck in our ruts. We often feel very trapped in our jobs, relationships, illnesses, aging and crippled bodies, disturbed and distressed minds. Most of

us are doing what we do, not because it brings us great joy, but it is simply what we do in order to cope with life and the fears that haunt it.

You see, I don't need anymore of my self and my self-help. I've had enough. The fact is, I can't help myself. What I need is to be rescued from my self. I need a savior. "A drowning man [or woman] cannot pull himself out of the water by his own hair," Luther insisted, "Neither can you do it. Someone else must rescue you."

I have often treasured St. Paul's words in Romans 7 where he surely speaks for all of us who have had to face the truth about ourselves: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it."

The prophet Jeremiah asks, perhaps a bit sarcastically, "Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

Nicodemus is in the dark when he wonders how it is possible for a man to be born when he is old: "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?"

"Yesterday I was a dog, today I am a dog," Snoopy laments in a Peanuts cartoon, "And tomorrow I'll still be a dog." He sighs, then thinks to himself, "There's so little room for improvement."

Newness, genuine change, seems so elusive. The allegedly "new and improved model" turns out to be pretty much the same old thing. But at a much deeper, existential level, I often wonder in my prayers, "When will I ever get the change that I seem so desperately to need?"

The biblical witness everywhere affirms that real newness, genuine relief, radical transformation comes, not through your own measly efforts, but only as a gift of God through faith. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for," the letter to the Hebrews explains, "the conviction of things not seen."

On this *last Sunday* before the *Last Sunday* of the Church Year, we come to the *last scene* of Jesus' public ministry where he stands at the Temple and points to the end. Somebody gets Jesus started with a rather innocent remark about the magnificence of the Jerusalem Temple, "how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God." In fact, the first century Jewish historian Josephus writes that the Temple in Jerusalem "appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain, for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white . . . more worthy of description than any [temple] under the sun." And Jesus whirls around and counters all this by declaring that the Temple will have an end, "There won't be a stone left standing on a stone," he says, "all will be thrown down . . ." And he was right. That day would come less than forty years later when the Temple and Jerusalem were plundered *again* and finally destroyed over the course of about four years, burnt to the ground by the Romans who were fed up with the Jewish rebellions. That is the last we have heard of the Jerusalem Temple. "Not one stone left upon another." Judaism began to accelerate in its rabbinic form; and Jewish believers in Jesus as the messiah regarded his body raised from the dead as the new temple, the new locus of God's presence in creation.

When you think about it, and most of us don't like to think about it, every temple is a doomed house, including our own bodies which the Apostle in Corinthians calls "temples of the Holy Spirit." Every temple is burning. "Time like an ever rolling stream,

/ Soon bears us all away;" we sing, "We fly forgotten as a dream / Dies at the op'ning day." "[But] if for this life only we have hoped," says Paul, again in Corinthians, "then we really are most of all to be pitied."

After all his talk about the end, curiously Jesus tells his friends, ". . . But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

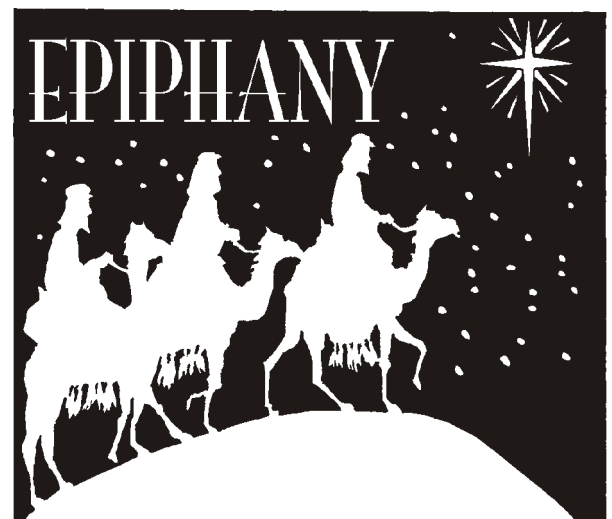
"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." There is newness coming, but newness is not painless. "The truth will set you free," Jesus reminds us in John, but before it does, to use a paraphrase, it will make you miserable. For something to be born, something has to die. For us to enter a new world, we have to let go of an old one. For us to enter a new church, for us to enter a new body, for us to enter a new freedom, we have got to let go of an old one. And letting go of old worlds and old ways, letting go of old addictions and old patterns of behavior, letting go of all that we depend upon and all that we have ever lived for, well, this is very, very painful and frightening. Yet, Jesus assures us, "the one who saves his life will lose it, and the one who loses her life will save it."

"Very truly, I tell you," says Jesus, again in John's Gospel, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Years ago, I walked through England's Coventry Cathedral which was laid to ruins by firebombs in World War II. A stunning new structure rose from the ruins which became a witness to the world to peace and to resurrection. Engraved in the floor near the entrance of the church is the arresting declaration: "To the Glory of God this cathedral burnt." And just outside, carved on the old burnt-out walls, is the little prophet Haggai's great promise: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."

"So it is with the resurrection of the dead," Paul concludes his first letter to the Corinthians, "What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body."

—Pastor Lauritsen



Bratislava, Slovakia Arden and Janna Haug

November 25, 2010



Dear Friends,

“There is a time for every season under heaven.” Europeans thrive on the orderliness of seasons. Even the decorations hanging in the Vienna International Airport remind travelers of what time it is and what season they should be enjoying. Not many American airports would have larger than life chestnuts hanging from the concourse ceiling. But this is a part of the world where restaurants offer an asparagus menu in the spring, a pumpkin menu in the fall, a poppy seed menu in early autumn, the new wine season in September and a goose season in November. Every food and place has its season under heaven.

In late October, I traveled to Transylvania to celebrate the retirement of Christoph Klein, the Bishop of the German-speaking Lutheran Church in Sibiu, Romania. Transylvania is the western region of Romania. The Germans, or Saxons as they are commonly called, were a respected and valuable minority. They had lived on and defended the land for nearly 800 years. The churches they built were protective fortresses against marauders and the Ottoman Empire. But the history changed dramatically for the Saxons in 1989. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the possibility of unification and “repatriation” was extended to all people of German background living in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the Soviet Union. The following year, 70 percent of the Saxon population in Transylvania left for Germany. It was the year that Christoph Klein was elected and installed as bishop. Many people wondered whether he would be the last bishop of the German-speaking church. The German Church was devastated by the losses. There was anxiety in every congregation as the pastors and the young families left for a better life abroad. Bishop Klein faithfully visited every congregation and walked with them through the darkest hours of their church’s history. He became for them a living symbol of their church. He played a significant role in the ecumenical movement in Romania, and he was an important agent of change and peace. It was a painful moment in the retirement service when he handed over his bishop’s cross for the next bishop who still had not been elected. “There is a time for every season under heaven.”



November 1st, All Saints Day, is a holiday in much of Central and Eastern Europe. During the days prior to All Saints and the November 2nd, All Souls’ Day, family members visit the cemeteries to clean the graves, to place fresh flowers and to light candles in honor of the dead. Mums, pine bough, heather and candles are the typical items for decorating the graves. Schools often have an All Saints vacation to accommodate the travel made during these days. In the evenings, people stroll through the cemeteries remembering their family members. This is not a somber occasion, but rather an honorable, respectful way of honoring the dead. In some of the larger cemeteries, police are positioned at dusk to direct the heavy traffic. Not every one can travel to their home towns, and so cemeteries often have a common marker where people can place candles to honor those who have died in other places in Slovakia and around the world. “There is a time for every season under heaven.”



I know from personal experience, that Scandinavians can be just as “sensitive” to the issue of timing and season as the Central and Eastern Europeans. But I was quite surprised on my recent trip with my wife Janna and the youth of the Bratislava International Church to a youth conference in Stockholm to discover how much the Swedes were allowed to pick and choose. Since we were arriving in early November, I thought it would be a good opportunity to stock up on *lutefisk* for Christmas. To my surprise, it was not available. I asked a grocer when *lutefisk* would be available, and the woman answered, “You know, you can’t eat it until All Saints, so it should be available on Saturday, November 6th.” (Yes, a week after All Saints in the rest of Europe.) Then she added, but they may have it already at the gourmet market, Ostermalmstorg. It was only Friday, but I decided to take my chances and I went to Ostermalmstorg. I stopped at the first fish counter and asked whether they had *lutefisk*. “No, but it should be coming any day now. You know you can’t eat it until All Saints.” I walked away a little frustrated. A few minutes later, the fishmonger came up to me and announced under his breath, “The *lutefisk* is coming today at 11.” I asked whether they would be open the next day. “No, we’re not. It’s a holiday.” All Saints Day, I suspected. He answered innocently and honestly. “Tomorrow is Halloween.” I was ready to tell him that October 31st is Halloween, but I didn’t want to ruin my chances of procuring illicit, pre-season *lutefisk*. I returned to Ostermalmstorg just before closing, and I saw the *lutefisk*. I purchased my supply, and asked the fishmonger whether I was the first customer of the season. “Yes, you are,” he

answered. "You know you can't eat *lutefisk* before All Saints." Even in Sweden, "There is a time for every season under heaven."

Wishing you all a joyous Thanksgiving—and a hint of Advent!

—Arden and Janna Haug, sponsored missionaries in Slovakia



MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS

FOR THE CHURCH

- Charlene Patula, in loving memory of husband +David+.
Anne Roth, in memory of parents +John+ and +Christine Klimek+.
Betty Bagel and children, in memory of beloved husband and father +John Bagel+.
Betty Bagel and children, in memory of parents and grandparents +Anna+ and +John Kucan+ and +Anna+ and +Jozef Bagel+.
Susan Hrusik, in memory of dear parents, +Alzbeta+ and +Stefan Hrusik+, dear brother +John Hrusik+, and dear sister +Elizabeth Nestler+.
Betty Bagel and children, in memory of brother and uncle +Edward Kucan+.
Audrey Bucz, in memory of mother +Anna Stastny+ on the 25th anniversary of her passing.
Edward and Denise Kowalewicz, in celebration of their son Jason Edward's baptism on November 28th.
Jeff and Mary Quest, in celebration of their son Henry Lawrence's baptism on November 21st.
Adrienne Gana, in loving memory of grandmother +Anna Stastny+.
Wally Kessler, in memory of +Cathryn+ and +Dale Kessler+, +Walter+ and +Beatrice Kessler+, +Barbara Ray+, and +Martha Burghardt+.
Jan and Anna Sopoci, in honor of their upcoming 63rd wedding anniversary in February, 2011.



THE NEW YEAR

The new year is an open book
All neat and clean, each page
Ready to be written on
By those of every age.

Lord, help me, as I write each day
A page in my new book,
It may reflect good memories
When I reach the backward look.

A good deed shared, a kind word said,
A prayer for others given;
A job well done in honest toil—
These are the steps to heaven.

Help me to know that all I do
Becomes a part of me.
And all the good to others done
Will live eternally.

Vera K. Krapf

The Annual Western Conference
Mission Offering
will be received during the
Epiphany Season on Sunday, January 30th
The offering will benefit the leadership
training program of our synod which
assists seminarians and others who are
preparing for church leadership in
Central and Eastern Europe.
Special envelopes for this offering will be
available that Sunday in the bulletins.

JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

January 2nd:

Greeters: Mildred Melka and Lois Mika
Acolytes: Jonathan Meyers and Jonathan Haase
Assisting Minister: Tom Michaels
Comm. Minister: Charles Matthies
Lectors: Sheryl Hallmann and Kristine Boike
Nursery Attendant: Carrie Boike
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 9th:

Greeters: John and Janet Broussard
Acolytes: Abby Collins and Jake Collins
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Comm. Minister: Joan Triska
Lectors: Brandon Michaels and Sarah Michaels
Nursery Attendant: Vicki Michaels
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 16th:

Greeters: Ann Vana and Mildred Melka
Acolytes: Hannah Boike and Katie Melnyk
Assisting Minister: Brandon Michaels
Comm. Minister: Vicki Michaels
Lectors: Joanne Sefara and Robert Melnyk
Nursery Attendant: Lavinia Myers
Ushers: Wally Kessler and John Broussard

January 23rd:

Greeters: Lawrence and Ruth Bakalich
Acolytes: Isabelle Boike and Carrie Boike
Assisting Minister: Jan Hapgood
Comm. Minister: Anne Otjepka
Lectors: Tom and Lavinia Myers
Nursery Attendant: Kristine Boike
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

January 30th:

Greeters: Paul Watkiss and Lavinia Myers
Acolytes: Jessica Byrne and Donovan Byrne
Assisting Minister: Lois Mika
Comm. Minister: John Broussard
Lectors: Tom and Vicki Michaels
Nursery Attendant: Olivia Lauritsen
Ushers: Wally Kessler and Paul Watkiss

Sacristan and Altar Care:
Anne Otjepka



FEBRUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

February 6th:

Greeters: Anne Otjepka and Mildred Melka
Acolytes: Nina Ritacco and Sara Watkiss
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Comm. Minister: Shirley Wood
Lectors: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Nursery Attendant: Kristen Kovack
Usher: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

February 13th:

Greeters: Milan and Anita Horak
Acolytes: Jacob Czerak and Charles Haase
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Comm. Minister: Martin Pennino
Lectors: Olivia Lauritsen and Emily Kostelancik
Nursery Attendant: Katie Melnyk
Usher: Wally Kessler and Ann Pennino

February 20th:

Greeters: Ann Kmet and Fred Kuzel
Acolytes: Sarah Michaels and Rachel Michaels
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Comm. Minister: Joan Triska
Lectors: Gary and Jocelyn Drahos
Nursery Attendant: Carrie Boike
Usher: Wally Kessler and John Broussard

February 27th:

Greeters: Emil and Mildred Mendel
Acolytes: Donovan Byrne and Nathan Byrne
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Comm. Minister: Tom Myers
Lectors: Charles Matthies and Philip Painter
Nursery Attendant: Lavinia Myers
Usher: Wally Kessler and Joan Triska

Sacristan and Altar Care:
Ramona Suffern

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION MINISTERS

If you may be interested in serving as a communion distribution minister for our many brothers and sisters who reside in nursing homes, are recovering in rehabilitation centers, are hospitalized or homebound, please speak with Pastor Lauritsen who will be offering instruction and training in this important sacramental and visitation ministry to those who are unable to receive Communion with the congregation on Sunday mornings.

Remember

If you are unable to keep your scheduled date, please arrange for a replacement and call the church office with the change. Thank you.



PANTRY NEEDS

The Missions and Outreach Committee will be collecting food for the Riverside Township Food Pantry which serves the communities of North Riverside, Brookfield, Lyons and Riverside. To coordinate with our

Thanksgiving Day collection drop-off, the deadline to bring your non-perishable donations to church is Sunday, November 21st, 2010

Riverside Township
— Since 1871



**WHAT SHOULD
MY OFFERING BE?**

Many believe that the best approach to Christian stewardship of possessions is percentage, or proportionate, giving to the Church and its causes.

Percentage, or proportionate, giving always leads to questions about the age-old practice of tithing. The tithe (the giving of one-tenth of one's gain) is a time-honored practice which has glorified God in the lives of many people. In the Old Testament, the tithe was law. In the coming of Christ, humankind moved toward fuller understanding of the grace of God. The New Testament teaches that Christian giving must flow from our understanding of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. The response of the Christian disciple will be an earnest desire to surrender all of life to Him who gave His all for us.

If we consider tithing in the record of the people of the Bible, in the practice of many living Christians today, and in view of the broad appeals of many worthy charitable causes today, we discover that the tithe has been and still is a useful guide in the matter of financial stewardship. As we give careful consideration to the New Testament teaching relating to proportional, or percentage, giving, we are called to total commitment to Christ and to let Him speak to us personally about what our response to divine love will be.

Note that tithing is neither the required or ultimate practice in Christian giving. Nor must you be a tither to the Church and its causes before you can be a follower of Christ. But what is important is your answer to the question many ask. "But what should my offering be?" An answer is: "Your offering is what God leads you to do for Him in response to His love and provision for you."



Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, IL 60546
708-442-5250 708-442-5264 (fax)
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

Dennis J. Lauritsen, pastor church phone (708) 442-5250
email: djlauritsen@sbcglobal.net

Council Officers

President	Paul Watkiss
Vice President	John Broussard
Secretary	Fred Kuzel
Treasurer	William Boor
Financial Secretary	Charles Matthies

Council Members

Iveta Boyanchek	Charles Matthies
John Broussard	Susan Martinek
Sheryl Hallmann	Carol Melnyk
Jan Hapgood	Tom Michaels
John Kostelny	Paul Watkiss
Fred Kuzel	

Organizations/Committee Chairpersons

Community Life Committee	Martin and Ann Pennino
Dorcas Society	Emily Kostelancik
Finance Committee	John Kostelny
Ladies' Altar Guild	Susan Hrusik/Vera Borysek
Long Range Planning	Jan Hapgood
Maintenance	Jim Boyanchek
Missions and Outreach	Dan Tornil/Ramona Suffern
Mutual Ministry/Staff Support	Gary Drahos
Nominating Committee	Fred Kuzel
Social Ministry	Nick Sasuta/Joanne Sefara
Stewardship	Thomas Michaels and Thomas Myers
Sunday School	Sheryl Hallmann
Worship and Music	Charles Matthies

Staff

Administrative Asst.	Karen Rouleau
Parish Musician	David Richards
Preschool Director	Donna Tuider

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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