



The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 * (708) 442-5250

“Faith Active in Love”

www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

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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.

The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6th

We Offer What We Have



*Newly refurbished creche
at the Woodside entrance in December 2020.*

We bring what we can. We offer what we have. We give our time, our skills, our resources. We give not out of a sense of duty or obligation but in response to the immeasurable gift we have received.

Together, the church is the body of Christ, a ragtag community of believers following a hunch and a star. Together, we offer what we have. We offer our songs, words, hopes, fears, and failings. We offer our prayers. We offer our ability to comfort and mourn, our willingness to be vulnerable. We give our gifts, whatever they are, and we give them joyfully. Some shiny and new, some worn and mended, some cracked but beloved. Gifts more precious than gold, rarer than frankincense or myrrh.

We journey down a long road, sometimes through the dark. Together, we face danger. We face uncertainty. We face temptation. When we come finally, joyfully to celebrate the arrival of the baby Jesus, the king in the humble manger, we rejoice. We pay homage. We offer our gifts in response to the God who has given us all that we see and know. We offer what we have because of what we have received. We bring what we can because the gift that God gives us in Christ is a gift beyond our ability to measure.

We can't always offer as much as we wish we could, but we offer what we have in the spirit that we can and find that together, our broken gifts make a beautiful whole. The gift we have received is the sure and certain truth that our gifts are enough. That we are enough. That we are created with care and redeemed to be love and light in the world.

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Images of the Season for Epiphany

As we fumble our way out of bed on a winter morning that seems more like night, Isaiah's words "Arise, shine for your light has come!" may sound ironic. . . . But then, we know that the prophet's words have no connection at all to the changing seasons. No, they come to us in the context of our Lord's revelation as the beacon of salvation for the whole world. In response to that, the Epiphany season calls us, entices us, *commands* us to rise up, to leap out of those places where we live in spiritual dimness. God calls us to polish our glasses, clean our windows to be able to see with clarity this new thing that has happened. Arise! Shine! We are invited to greet and welcome the light—a luminescence that shines with such magnitude that it melts the icy coldness of our hearts.

Epiphany is no wimpy one-candle-in-the-darkness deal, but rather a blast of brightness heretofore unseen. Get up and see it! Bask in its brightness! Behold the light that shines upon us, scattering the darkness of our minds so that we may walk as children of the light. The light is Christ. Any spiritual light that we have is his, shining in and through us. And indeed, so great is the grace that shines upon us that it seems that our faces, like Moses', should be glowing with reflected glory. At the very least, our way of living surely will catch the light of Christ's love and shine it on those around us. Such is the extroverted, mission nature of this season.

And while the people are the church and thus will be the primary light-givers in this season, our centers of worship, too, should glow with the light. Don't let Epiphany be wimpy. Let everything associated with our worship shine in celebration that the light of our lives is living within us. Polish the metals in the worship center till they gleam. Light those candles. Let the light shine full blast. Our places of worship should be beacons, searchlights, calling out to all those who labor in spiritual darkness.

Epiphany begins at Bethlehem, but it deserves to be more than a half-baked rerun of Christmas—it has much to offer of its own. The magi followed an unmistakably bright star previously unknown, a luminous sign from God to pay attention. During the season of Epiphany we also celebrate the baptism of Jesus, introducing the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. A liturgy that includes the affirmation of our baptism certainly has a place on that day. Let it be a time to celebrate the brightness of being a child of God. Be washed in the bright waters of baptism, burn again with the fire of the Holy Spirit.

And the brightness carries on through the season. At Cana, Jesus does the first of his signs, revealing his glory. The rabbi Jesus proclaims the recovery of sight for the blind. Jesus' is a light seemingly too intense for some in his hometown. He invites others into the circle of his light, inviting fisherfolk to pull in people. Christ is a light that shines where none has before, blessing the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful. And finally comes the dazzling light of the transfigured Lord.

This light is for all people: "a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel" in the words of Simeon. This light and fire of God shines like a therapeutic laser right into the places where it is most needed. This cleansing light sears away the scales on our eyes, cauterizes the seeping wounds of sin, and halts the gnawing darkness of anxiety. This is a healing light, a refining light, a burnishing light and a purifying light. This light is like no other. This light has the power to save.

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The Story

By Judy Twist

The custom of holding Lessons and Carols sometime during the Advent or Christmas season originated at King's College in Cambridge in the year the Great War ended. It was a rather fancy way to tell a simple story, high church and glorious. But whether you tell the story in a Gothic cathedral with priests in surplice and cassock, or in a village church with little kids in bathrobes and paper crowns, it's the same story repeated, wondered at, puzzled over, relished, and entered into for 2,000 years. And whether it's sung with sophistication by boy choristers in ruffles accompanied by a masterful organ, or with a willing simplicity by a few octogenarians at a church piano, it's the same song, sung with astonishing trust in its ancient oddness and candid faith in its startling relevance.

It's such a good story. And so, we tell it year after year until its truth dawns on us, its power changes us, its vision redirects us, and all its promises come true. No matter who you are or where you find yourself on life's journey, the story and the song are for you.

If you're a little restless in spirit, if every now and then you're blindsided by a longing you can't quite name, if you've ever felt far away from yourself, if you wish you could clear away what's standing between you and the joy you know is in you—if that's how it is with you, restless and distant from your own heart, the story is

yours. The story, about people in a kind of exile, yearning for a light, for someone to bring them home. The song, your own heart's cry for a breakthrough, for joy at last—O Come, O come! Rejoice, rejoice! If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

If you're exhausted from the effort to climb to the top, if your heart's a little soured from doing the things it takes to get there and to stay there, if you're asking yourself what it's costing you, whether you might be happier some other way—if that's how it is with you, tired of climbing, wondering if down might be better than up, the story's yours. The story, about a God who comes down, lays glory aside, abandons privilege to become small, and all for love. If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

If you're feeling stymied as you survey an unjust world, if you're angry and depressed about how things are, if you're tempted to throw in the towel—if that's how it is with you, edging towards despair, the story's for you. The story about the fear engulfing a proud tyrant's city, while in a village just nine miles away—light years away—heavenly peace holds sway. A vision, the powerful down from thrones, the poor up from the dust, justice no longer denied. If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

If you've made a mess of something, maybe your life, if there are unkempt places in your heart you'd rather never come to light, if you know what you deserve and fear an accounting, if you think you're not good enough for God to love you—if that's how it is with you, hiding something, ashamed, the story is for you. The story of a truce between earth and heaven, of pardon and peace and the erasure of shame, a story in which the feared judge turns out to be someone so like us, knowing our weaknesses well, from the inside out. If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

If you're sad tonight, if you carry a heart pierced with the fresh pain of recent loss, or an old loss still sharp, if you're acting brave but really want to curl up and cry—if this is how it is with you, grieving, bereft, the story's for you. The story about a hard journey, following a star on sheer faith, keeping company with others in the long cold night as life and love are somehow born again. If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

And if you're joyous, at peace and full of hope, if you're amazed by all the love you've received and all the love you've given in your life, if even your sacrifices are wellsprings of joy, if your thanks cannot be counted—if this is how it is with you, awestruck and grateful, the story is for you. The story about love in the beginning, about love in the end, about light in shadows that shadows cannot overcome, about the unaccountable graciousness that makes you the apple of God's eye. If this is the story you need to hear, I hope you heard it.

Dear friends in Christ, the church doesn't offer certainty or safety. Faith won't fix your problems. We have no armies, no power to force right where there is wrong. No doctrine or rule in our tradition can change a heart or mend it. We have nothing efficient to offer the world.

But we have a story. We have songs. The story of fierce love, tenacious hope, the surprise of God in flesh appearing. The Christmas story. And we tell it to all who need to hear it, with all who need to sing it, we share it with love. No matter where you find yourself on life's journey, it's yours. A gift to you from God.

May it save your life, heal your heart, soothe your pain, shield your gladness, awaken your desire, strengthen your hope, and give you joy that never ends.

—submitted by Charles Matthies

If one gives food to others, one will improve one's own lot, just as, for example, if one lights a fire for others, one will brighten one's own way (Nichiren Daishonin, "The Three Virtues of Food," ca. 1278).



Fred Kuzel and Jane Lauritsen (not shown) deliver groceries collected by the congregation during the weeks before Thanksgiving to the Riverside Township Food Pantry for assisting households in need. The pantry serves the communities of Lyons, North Riverside, Riverside and Stickney. Photo by Jane Lauritsen. Thanksgiving Day monetary offerings were given to the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

JANUARY

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|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Jan. 3: Gerald "J.T." Tarbox | Jan. 18: John Galdun |
| Jan. 4: Suzanna Skudrna | Jan. 20: William Boor |
| Jan. 6: Esther Meksto | Jan. 22: Trevor Jech |
| Jan. 8: Samuel Lauritsen | Kenneth Kostelancik |
| Jan. 9: Olga Zavodny | Mildred Riban |
| Jan. 10: Joyce Hodul | Jan. 31: Leslie Byrne |
| Jan. 14: Thomas Michaels | Rachel Decosola |
| Jan. 15: Sarah Gavac | |

Birthdays and Anniversaries

January 18, 2015: James and Kathi Zinsser
 January 19, 2014: Eric and Gretchen Kostelny
 January 21, 1996: Leslie and Matthew Byrne

Happenings

Congregation Council Meeting
 Thursday, January 20th, 7:30 p.m.

Memorial Flowers

Dec. 5th: In celebration of Luddy Kovalsky on her 90th birthday by loving children Bill Kovalsky and Linda Painter, and their families.

In loving memory of dear husband +Larry Bakalich+ on the 93rd anniversary of his birth on December 7th by remembering wife Ruth.

Dec. 12th: In memory of dear mother +Anna Slahor+ on the anniversary of her birth and the 30th anniversary of her death by remembering children John and Joanne Slahor and Shirley Babyar.

News from Riverside Preschool at Sts. Peter and Paul

We will be starting off celebrating 2022 with number projects focusing on 20 along with winter and snow. We will end the month with a "Crazy Dazy Day" where we go crazy for preschool.

—Lisa Manganiello, Preschool Director

Memorials and Honorariums

❖ For the Church ❖

Deb and Dave Bark, Ken and Pam Wood, Mike and Tam Wood, Sue and Larry Kusch and their families, in loving memory of +Shirley Wood+ for all the wonderful Christmas memories.
 Dr. Philip and Linda Painter, in celebration of Brayden Thomas' baptism.
 Charlene Patula, in memory of dear husband +David+, parents +Emil+ and +May Terem+, and beloved pet +Blizzard Patula+.



Lux Cantorum Chicago performing its "Holiday Blessings" concert at Sts. Peter and Paul on Sunday, December 5th. This was the first live concert at the church in two years since December 2019. Photo by Rafael Martinez.



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DATED MATERIAL

JANUARY WORSHIP SERVERS

January 2nd:

Greeters: Edward and Joanne Sefara
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Lector: Joanne Sefara
Usher: Fred Kuzel

January 9th:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Lector: J. T. Tarbox
Usher: Walter Cudecki

January 16th:

Greeters: Larry Crachy and Karen Kubik
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Lector: Charles Matthies
Usher: John Kostelny

January 23rd:

Greeters: John and Shirley Kostelny
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Lector: John Kostelny
Usher: Rafael Martinez

January 30th:

Greeter: Carole Pollitz
Assisting Minister: Brandon Michaels
Lector: John Broussard
Usher: Janet Broussard

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Fred Kuzel



FEBRUARY WORSHIP SERVERS

February 6th:

Greeters: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Lector: George Valek
Usher: Fred Kuzel

February 13th:

Greeter: Ann Kmet
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Lector: Fred Kuzel
Usher: Janet Broussard

February 20th:

Greeters: Larry Crachy and Karen Kubik
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Lector: Jane Lauritsen
Usher: John Koselny

February 27th:

Greeters: Philip and Linda Painter
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Lector: Beverly Tarbox
Usher: Walter Cudecki

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Janice Hapgood

December Announcements

- ★ Offering envelopes for 2022 have arrived! These are available for pick-up in the lower hallway adjacent to the dining hall and, for those who have been attending in-person worship, envelopes are located at the entrance to the sanctuary. Envelopes may also be delivered directly to your home if you are not able to pick them up due to on-going virus conditions. If you or your relatives would like to have your envelopes mailed to you, please contact Karen in the church office.
- ★ 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 for a fee. Thank you for your assistance.