

Knowing the warts and history of the Church, why do you remain a Christian? Have you invited someone to consider Christ?

A Social Statement on: ABORTION [This social teaching statement was adopted by a more than two-thirds majority vote at the second biennial Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, meeting in Orlando, Florida, August 28-September 4, 1991.]

- The topic of abortion evokes strong and varied convictions about the social order, the roles of women and men, human life and human responsibility, freedom and limits, sexual morality, and the significance of children in our lives. It involves powerful feelings that are based on different life experiences and interpretations of Christian faith and life in the world. If we are to take our differences seriously, we must learn how to talk about them in ways that do justice to our diversity. The language used in discussing abortion should ignore neither the value of unborn life nor the value of the woman and her other relationships. It should neither obscure the moral seriousness of the decision faced by the woman nor hide the moral value of the newly conceived life. Nor is it helpful to use the language of ‘rights’ in absolute ways that imply that no other significant moral claims intrude. A developing life in the womb does not have an absolute right to be born, nor does a pregnant woman have an absolute right to terminate a pregnancy. The concern for both the life of the woman and the developing life in her womb expresses a common commitment to life. This requires that we move beyond the usual ‘prolife’ versus ‘pro-choice’ language in discussing abortion.

What is the status of this conversation in our local faith community today? What words or phrases seem important to you today?

Sunday, January 5th 8:30 a.m.

Ushers: Don & Debbie Hardersen
Reader: Don or Debbie Hardersen
Comm Prep: Dee Ihlenfeldt
Comm Server: Jeff & Kristi fortune, Dee Ihlenfeldt
PowerPoint: Conor Fortune
Video: Linda Kenny

Sunday, January 5th 10:30 a.m.

Ushers: Shawn Lambertsen family
Reader: Shawn or Valerie Lambertsen
Comm Prep: Kenny family
Comm Server: Linda Kenny, Aaron & Deb Zumbach
PowerPoint: Dean Lambertsen; **Video:** Ivan Lambertsen

ELCA Good Gift Report: With matching gifts. St. Paul has donated \$1190 to date.

Sunday, January 5th

- * 8:30am Worship Welcome Karon Ireland
- * 9:30am Coffee Hour
- * 10:30am Worship
- * 1:00pm Reduced to Joy study

Monday, January 6

- * 9:30am Woodland Park communion service.
- All Are Welcome.

Tuesday, January 7

- * 12:00pm Sisters Ecumenical Study—Grounds and Goodies
- * 1:30pm Prayer—in side chapel
- * 2:30pm R & R - in side chapel
- * 6:00pm Grief Support—LL CE
- * 8:00pm AA—LL CE

Wednesday, January 8th

- * 7:00am Good Guys Bible Study—McOttos
- * 8:00am Lutheran Men in Mission
- * 6:00pm Worship
- * 6:00pm WD4

Saturday, January 11

- * 5:30pm PJ’s & Tie Night

Church Office Hours: There is typically church staff in the building Monday through Friday. **Lois’ office hours** are: Mon. & Th 9-2; Tue. 12:30–5:30; Wed. 9-4; Fri 9-12. Outside these hours call ahead to see if someone is here.

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Church Secretary email: stpaulanamosa@gmail.com

Wednesday, January 8th

Ushers: WD4 Students
Reader: WD4 Students
Comm Prep: Dorothy Wood
Comm Server: WD4 Students
PowerPoint: WD4 Students

Sunday, January 12th 8:30 a.m.

Ushers: Merlyn & Marlaire Wilken
Reader: Mary Lou Schipper
Comm Prep: Merlyn & Marlaire Wilken
Comm Server: Mike & Nancy Bickford, Pete Bungam
PowerPoint: Lois Ocenosak
Video: Linda Kenny

Sunday, January 12th 10:30 a.m.

Ushers: CJ Sullivan family
Reader: Shawna Giegerich
Comm Prep: Dan & Lynn Rickels
Comm Server: Shawna Giegerich, Dan & Lynn Rickels
PowerPoint: Ruby Robertson
Video: Sebastian Goldsmith

Sunday, January 5, 2019



The feast of Epiphany continues the Christmas season with a celebration of God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God’s love to all people.

Prayer Concerns: Dennis Heth, Peter & Claire Mannon; Zack, Aspin & Livi Covey; Ruth Ann Bungum, Mathew Joens, Staci Sisler, Darlene Hellman, mother of Deb Oldham; Sharm Sisler, Barry Anderson, Marty Rowland. (Names will be removed from the prayer list after four weeks unless there is a change in the person's condition. Requests need to be made by an immediate family member.)

Synod Book Club January 16th - *Let Your Life Speak*, by Parker Palmer

Join others from around the synod for a short discussion on the book. This book about purpose and vocation is for everyone. Learn more from the summary on the author's website. “Is the life I am living the same as the life that wants to live in me?” With this searching question, Parker Palmer begins an insightful and moving meditation on finding one's true calling. *Let Your Life Speak* is an openhearted gift to anyone who seeks to live authentically. The book's title is a time-honored Quaker admonition, usually taken to mean “Let the highest truths and values guide everything you do.” But Palmer reinterprets those words, drawing on his own search for selfhood. “Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it,” he writes, “listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.” January 16th, 7:30 pm, all are welcome. Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/78d6829a4787d4b1dc2040ba88984b7b>

Tie in Your PJs: On Sat., Jan. 11 at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall we will be making tie blankets for the Willis Dady Homeless Shelter in Cedar Rapids. Come enjoy a cozy night of helping make sure others are cozy during these cold winter nights! You are welcome to come in your Pj’s or however you are most comfortable. We will be serving spaghetti, milk and juice. There will be a craft for our young ones. We can use as many people helping as possible! Our goal is to make 25 blankets. Bring sewing scissors if you have them. Please call the office to RSVP to Kaileen or sign-up on the bulletin board in the church entrance.

Epiphany/2nd Sunday after Christmas

Liturgy setting one can be found on pages 57-74 in the green Lutheran Book of Worship

All Are Welcome to commune with Christ in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We serve the fruit of the vine under two forms: wine and grape juice. The inner ring of the tray is grape juice. If in doubt, please ask the distributor. Gluten free hosts are available; please notify an usher before service begins.

Welcome New Member: Karon Ireland usually attends the 8:30 service and will be welcomed this Sunday. She says: I moved to Anamosa from Cedar Rapids in 2019 to be closer to family. I was a member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. I am retired from State Farm Insurance and love spending time with my grandchildren and taking care of my 2 great grandchildren.

Potluck & Prayer for Christian Unity: On Mon., Jan. 20, observe Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by joining together with people of all faiths for the Christian Unity prayer service hosted at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Anamosa. Potluck will start at 5:00 p.m. and service at 6:30 p.m. More information is available in the Pulse.

Thank you to everyone that purchased gifts for the families from our HACAP Giving Tree. The families were very appreciative & thankful for the gifts given to them. Your generosity helped to make Christmas a little brighter for families needing assistance during the holiday season.

Those interested in providing home communion and current providers: We will meet January 12th between services in the church basement for donuts and coffee. We look forward to answering any questions regarding home communion. This also gives those currently providing home communion the opportunity to share experiences and field questions for our new partners. Thank you for making this a priority to serve those unable to attend services.

The word epiphany means: *showing forth, insight, or revelation of the divine*. In a matter of three weeks, as a Church we have celebrated the birth of the Christ-light into the world, his growing up amidst a family that was holy and not perfect, and his “revelation” to the world through the witness of the Magi. Today’s gospel story relates only one of the

epiphania = showing forth of God’s presence through Jesus; others include his baptism in the Jordan and his wedding miracle at Cana. Early Christians kept the feast of Epiphany as the celebration of God’s incarnation; in contrast, the celebration of Christmas was added in the 4th century as a response to a Roman feast for their Sun god. In the Eastern Christian Churches (Greek, Russian, Syrian, Ethiopian, etc), Epiphany is still a bigger celebration than Christmas because it is the proclamation to the people of the east that the new King of Kings had come. On this day, gifts are exchanged.

First Reading: The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 60: 1-6

What or who serves as your light, shining forth the splendor of God and giving your life meaning: your spouse or children, the Eucharist, a Bible, your job, singing or a song, a teacher or grandparent, a picture of Jesus, a prayer candle, the church, or a special memory? Close your eyes and imagine being separated from that light....

The prophet Isaiah is writing to the Jews who have returned from the Babylonian exile to their beloved city, Jerusalem. Shortly after their return, infighting began over identifying the rightful priests, the rebuilding of the Temple, proper worship, and the admission of non-Jews into the community. This fighting threatened to blot out the light and darken the veil separating them from God’s will. In this passage, Isaiah appeals to their goodness and seeks to inspire their steadfast kindness by proclaiming the beloved city of Jerusalem {City of Peace} as the source of light for all nations. This brilliant light is God’s *shekinah* (glory) flowing through the faithful remnant as they treat each other and foreigners with justice and compassion. This concept of receiving foreigners into the body of believers is new to them and becomes hotly contested among the leaders. It is Isaiah’s prophecy that God’s presence is fully revealed when his plan for salvation is inclusive of all people. To show the universality of this plan, Isaiah includes lands surrounding Judea in the list of those who will come to freely worship Yahweh in Jerusalem. Some of these are references back four hundred years to the great kingdom of Israel under King Solomon.

“Riches of the sea” refers to the wealthy fishing regions of Tyre and Phoenicia to the north of Israel (Syria); “Midian, Sheba, and Ephah” are references to the southern and eastern regions of Arabia and the Gulf of Aqabah. These regions were known for their myriad camels and rich spices which came to them from all parts of the known world. Interestingly, the Arabic word for “fragrant spices” has the same root word as the Hebrew for gold. Most likely, the gift

of gold in this story is also a reference to spice, no less a sign of wealth because it was used to show reverence when burned on the altar of YHWH. This is the message of the gifts that Matthew wants to emphasize in his gospel story; what was used to reverence YHWH in the Hebrew Scriptures is also used to reverence the Christ child.

Even today, the Jewish people recognize the responsibility that accompanies their lives in Jerusalem; they have been called to be light for all nations. They must tell all people of the blessings and expectations of God. One can get a glimpse into the hearts of a people who are desperately fighting right now to preserve the status of their beloved city. Jews fear losing their city and the light.

Even though the Holy Land is important to us, we Christians identify the light and promises of God less with a city or place and more with the person of Jesus. Jesus is like Jerusalem, radiant in glory, guiding all peoples and receiving gifts of reverence and honor. The Christian community is the Body of Christ, the new Israel, the place from which God’s glory shines forth. Christmas proclaims this chorus; Epiphany adds the music.

Second Reading: The letter to the Christian community in Ephesus, Turkey and beyond 3:1-12 NIV

St. Paul’s ministry was marked by controversy. Among the earliest followers of Jesus {all devout Jews} there arose a dispute about who could be counted as saved. Paul, Peter, Barnabus, and others argued that the salvation offered through Christ was available to all people, regardless of race or religious heritage. Each of them recounted stories of non-Jews {Gentiles} receiving Holy Spirit. The original view held by the orthodox Jews was that Jesus, the Messiah, had come only to the Jewish nation, and that it was necessary to observe the Jewish Law in order to be saved. The letter to the Ephesians, written by a follower of Paul, picks up on Paul’s argument and insists that God’s blessings, including the gift of Godself in human form, were intended for all.

The early Christian community in Ephesus was comprised mostly of Gentiles, so the author employs the Pauline symbol of the body. In this passage, Gentiles are pictured as a limb of Christ’s body while the vital organs are Israel. By being part of the body, Gentiles are to be treated as equals in the Christian community. The author emphasizes this point by using the prefix “co-” meaning “with or together” two more

times when naming Gentiles co-heirs of the promise and co-partners in the mission of Christ. Since most of us are non-Jewish followers of Christ, we are direct recipients of this Epiphany message.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

We have heard parts of this gospel passage several times in three weeks; what new ideas can we take from it today?

Magi (Matthew doesn’t include names or a number) came to Judea looking for a new king. Magi were a caste of highly respected political-religious advisers to the rulers of ancient Persia (modern day Iran and southern Iraq.) They believed that the sky mirrored the earth, and so they became adept star gazers, continuously predicting the future through astrological phenomena. These royal advisers resisted western (Roman) imperialism and longed for a strong Persian king. This history makes them good candidates for support of Jesus who even in his infancy is being acknowledged by Matthew as one who will stand against the tyranny of the pagan Romans. Like the Egyptian princess who discovered the Hebrew infant Moses and protected him, the Persian Magi discover the Hebrew infant Jesus then follow a dream that protects him.

As Matthew conveys the story, the Magi began looking for this new king in the logical place, a palace. But there they encountered the king of the Judean people, Herod the Great, who was a ruthless, greatly disliked Roman-puppet king. He was a Jew by birth, but his family came from the land of Idumea, a land the Jews conquered and ruled over for hundreds of years. The Idumeans were brought to Israel as slaves during that time. While they were eventually incorporated into the Jewish society, they were held in suspicion as “foreigners.” Herod’s family grew in power, and now, as a friend of the Romans, was put on the throne. He was ruthless, killing members of his own family who didn’t serve his ideas. In the eyes of the Jewish peasants, he was a traitor who tried desperately to win over their affections through massive building projects. Herod collected heavy taxes and then tried to impress the Jews by using their tax dollars to introduce new Roman architecture, aqueducts, and road building techniques. He had a massive stone dock constructed in Caesarea Maritima, in order to draw merchants from throughout the Mediterranean

world (the ruins of this dock can still be seen just below the water’s surface.) He even rebuilt their beautiful Temple in Jerusalem, sparing no expense. Clusters of solid gold grapes the size of bowling balls ornamented its parapet that stood atop 150 foot whitewashed pillars. In actuality, Herod was very jealous and enacted ways to protect himself. He would not tolerate even the rumor of a rival king.

The plan to rid himself of this rival king inspired his request of the sages to inform him of their find. While these visitors from the east paid homage to the infant king who would later welcome all people to His Father’s Kingdom, Herod sought to destroy anyone who would challenge his kingship. While the magi opened coffers of great wealth to the humble child, Herod spent the wealth of the nation on spies and thugs to ensure his place on the throne would be preserved. Herod is the epitome of those who never realized the Messiah was in their midst, while the star-gazers from another land epitomize those who meet the Lord because their longing opens their hearts to search. In Matthew’s telling of Jesus’ life, the Magi astrologers become the first bringers of the Good News to foreign lands, while foreshadowing the lands to which Jesus would later send his own disciples.

Taking it home:

The Jewish followers of Jesus were challenged to accept the Gentiles into the faith. Like them, we are challenged to welcome the entire world to His table without regard for class, race or appearance. Name two people whom you neglected to show respect because s/he made you uncomfortable: a teenager, a woman, someone of a different ethnicity or religion or denomination, an in-law. Ask God for the ability to welcome those people in the future.

Have you ever encountered someone who tried to trick you into being a part of their devious scheme? How did you feel when you realized the plot? What did you do?

Recount memories of growing up in a church which claimed one group was saved while others were not. Grandparents, relate to your grandchildren how things have changed in the Church during your lifetime. How are they changing right now?

Does infighting threaten to darken God’s presence within your home or family? Make the decision and effort to talk rather than shout, to listen rather than demand, to refrain from cursing.

Three times a day this month, pray for the grace to be less jealous and more grateful.