

PASTORS PAGE

Twinkle! Twinkle! Little Star

"After listening to the king (Herod), they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him." Matthew 2:9-11

What was this star twinkling before the wisemen? First, the prophecy about the star comes from Numbers 24:17a *"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel."* The wisemen would have known about his prophecy because they had the Jewish Scriptures - the Books of Moses. Babylonian and the Persians were seekers of knowledge. The Jewish Scriptures would have been studied. And the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit works through the Word. He would have opened the eyes of the wisemen. By Faith these men would have understood this prophecy.

Again, what was the star? Some have speculated that it was a supernova. Some have stated it was the alignment of planets. Some have stated it was a comet. Many Christians understand this star to be a special manifestation by God.

One of my professors at the Seminary, the late Pastor John Saleska, stated this special star may have been created during the 7 days of creation. This star's illumination was hidden by God until the proper time. Moreover, the star was only seen by the wisemen. When they came into Jerusalem searching for the child born to be the next king of the Jews, no one in Herod's court knew about the star. It was likely they knew Numbers 24:17 and added Micah 5:2 *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."* As soon as the wisemen received the location off they went!

Matthew states: *"And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."* The star moved ahead of them. They were the only ones to see the star.

According to Exodus, God used a similar event. *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.' So, Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived."* Exodus 10:21-23. Israel was in the light. The Egyptians were in the dark.

The wisemen were in the light. Everyone else was in the dark! God has done this in the past and surely, He could do it for the wisemen.

The wisemen did see a star. A star that they and only they could see. The star was hidden from all others. This was a miraculous and special revelation done by God. This star moved. It led the wisemen to the Christ child. If God can miraculously have a virgin conceive and bear a son, then surely a star can be manifested for only the eyes of the wisemen.

Merry Christmas,

Pastor and Julie Steele

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to all who attended the voters' meeting. Your input is important to us, and we appreciate the feedback we received. I'd also like to thank the council members along with their various board members for all their hard work and diligence that they put into everything we proposed at the meeting. I pray that the Lord continues to guide us forward and provide for us in the coming year, so we may continue carrying out our mission here at Bethany.

In order to meet our approved budget for next year, we rely on a steady flow of contributions from the congregation. I'd like to encourage anyone who isn't using the E-giving option to consider giving through that. It is safe, easy to set up, convenient, and saves you time from having to write checks, fill out envelopes, etc. It also helps our board of finance to be able to better forecast our income and manage cash flow. See Gina in the office if you'd like to have that setup.

As we close out the year, I'd just like to say that it has been a pleasure serving as your president. I'd like to thank those in the congregation who have taken the time to offer kind words of encouragement throughout the year. It wasn't something I was prepared for, and I continue to pray for the Lord's guidance as I continue to serve. I welcome any feedback or constructive criticism, so if there's anything I can do different or better, please feel free to talk with me!

As we go into the Advent season and look forward to celebrating the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, on Christmas, I'd like to wish you all a safe, peaceful, and healthy holiday season filled with the Lord's love and blessings. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,
Andy Fibiger

2024 CONTRIBUTION ENVELOPES

2024 Contribution Envelopes will be available in the lower narthex starting December 3. It is very important that you do not use them until January 1, 2024. Any contributions for 2023 need to be in by Sunday, December 31, either in the offering plate or in the Financial Secretary mailbox in the communication room. If you would like to consider automatic giving through the Joyful Response giving program, you can find registration forms on the counter outside Pastor's office. See Gina in the office with any questions.



CHARITY OF THE MONTH FOR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

During the months of November and December, any money received in the "Designated Offering" contribution envelope, will go to **Lutheran World Relief**. Their development projects focus on issues at the root causes of poverty. These debilitating causes tend to domino into more and more problems that trap people in poverty. By the same token, attacking just one of these issues can help break the cycle, making people's lives better and freeing them from suffering in many ways. Lutheran World Relief helps by implementing projects all over the world that help with water purification, aiding in emergencies, agriculture, climate, health & livelihood and civic participation. To learn more visit www.lwr.org

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

12-1: Bill Strenger
Luke Matte

12-3: Devon Brooks

12-4: Rayola Madson

12-5: Kaleb Faucher
Julie Schuman

12-7: Celestina Duran

12-10: Nancy Johnson

12-14: Dori Matte



12-15: David Hasler

12-16: Rebecca Tershner
Diane Marotz

12-17: Marilyn Kirchenwitz

12-18: John Tershner

12-21: Esther Bennig
Shua Yang

12-22: Karl Rademacher

12-23: Cory Luecke

Brad Cox

12-25: Kevin Werner

12-31: Ken Buesing



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12-26: Kurt & Kathryn Miller

Blessings to all that are celebrating this month!

If we missed a member's birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office, and let us know.

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Advent Services – Wednesday December 6, 13, 20 at 6:00pm

Children's Christmas Program – Sunday, December 17 at 10:00am

Regular Sunday Service – Sunday, December 24 at 10:00am

Christmas Eve Service – Sunday, December 24 at 4:00pm

Christmas Day Service w/Holy Communion – Monday, December 25 at 9:00am



Note: there will be no Sunday School or Confirmation on December 24 or 31



The church office will be closed December 25 – 29.

MY BETHANY FAMILY

Thank you for being with us on our "trip" that sent Bill to the hospital. Every day your prayers and comforting words were there to support me. It was a blessing when you placed me, the nurses, and doctors in the hands of our Heavenly Father. Our Pastor continued ministering to me and our family at St. Lukes and at home. The result was a release from hospitalization and recovery with minor health concerns. It has been a real joy to once again be back worshipping with my Bethany family!

Judi and Bill Strenger



CORNER

PRAYER

This space in our newsletter will be used to remember Bethany members that may need thoughts and prayers. This month we remember our three nursing home members.

Esther Bennig

Pine Haven Christian Communities
220 Haven Drive
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

Arlana Weber

Harvest Home
2003 Apple Tree Rd.
Howards Grove, WI 53083

Mary Hummitzsch

Prairie Crossing
1280 Pine Haven Lane #208
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

Feel free to send cards or notes, visit these members, or add them to your daily prayers. If you or someone you know would like to be added to the Prayer Corner, contact the church office.

**OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

The Sunday School children had a great time shopping for gifts to fill shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. We were able to fill 12 boxes that were dropped off and shipped to children all over the world.

**KOHLER CHRISTMAS WALK**

The Kohler Village Caroling Walk will be held this year on December 10 starting at 4pm at St. John Parish, then along School Street to Grace Church, and down Church Street to finish up at Bethany Lutheran. We are planning to have the leaders carrying old-fashioned lanterns and donned with capes, to lead the carolers on their route through the village. So, start now and find an old cloak or muff and join in the merry carolers. Each stop will include a short program including songs and a reading and then back out to the street to the next stop. Finishing at Bethany Lutheran, at the end of the program, all are welcome to enjoy homemade Christmas sweets and treats as well as hot chocolate.

Mark your calendars! This is a long-time tradition within the Village of Kohler that began with assistance from the Kohler Kiwanis over 40 years ago to bring together three churches of the village providing an evening of song, readings, and community fellowship. All are invited and welcome to be a part of the fun!



CALLING ALL BAKERS!

We are in need of cookies and bars and other handheld sweet treats for the Christmas Walk on December 10. If you are able to provide some, please sign up on the sheet on the lower narthex bulletin board or contact the church office. Treats can be dropped off Sunday, December 10 before church or any time after 2:00pm.



Thankful, Grateful, and Blessed

The season of Thanksgiving and then sharing the blessing of the Christmas message makes us appreciate all our partner Churches and volunteers even more. Together we are the hands and feet of Jesus, and together we will continue to work hard impacting lives in Sheboygan County.

Thank you, Friends at Bethany, for your prayers, help, and support whenever needed. Knowing we are part of the 2024 budget, and the extra financial help we receive during the year, will assure our mission to impact lives in the name of Christ will continue to thrive.

God Bless! I will close with one of our 2023 Stories of Hope shared by a neighbor who attended one of the New Way Classes held at Love INC. ~ Sue Prange, Love INC Representative

The Impact of Hope

She slipped in the door, trying not to call attention to herself, but scanning the room, trying to figure out which person she had spoken to on the phone earlier that day. Then someone approached her and welcomed her with open arms, proud that she had mustered up the courage to walk through the doors of an unfamiliar church, not knowing a single soul. She was nervous and scared, but desperate for healing. As Love INC learned her story, she shared that, "For almost 4 years I failed at everything. After a 16-year marriage of cross categorical abuse, my divorce was finalized. Those 4 years of failure were filled with the loss of my job, my house, my children. The trauma was overwhelming."

These are her own words after completing Love INC's Affirming Potential class and now attending the Boundaries class:

"I was in rehabs, counseling, partial hospitalization programs, intensive outpatient programs; I also tried medication. The New Way Program was the first successful program I went through. I found an environment where I am not judged, where no one questions my intent or integrity. There is sincere, individual treatment, unconditional acceptance, and realistic expectations. The Affirming Potential class taught me how to affirm my potential in Christ. I felt validated and proud of myself for the first time in a long time. It has given me hope for tomorrow."

DECEMBER 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					01	02
03 8:45am Sunday School & Confirmation 10am Worship w/HC	04 6:30pm Elders	05	06 6pm Advent Worship 7pm Bible Study	07 10am Bible Study 6:30pm Board of Education 7:15pm Dartball (away)	08	09
10 8:45am Sunday School & Confirmation 10am Worship 4pm Christmas Walk	11 6:15pm Finance 7pm Council	12	13 6pm Advent Worship 7pm Bible Study	14 10am Bible Study 7:15pm Dartball @ Bethany	15	16
17 8:45am Sunday School & Confirmation 10am Worship w/HC (children's	18	19	20 6pm Advent Worship 7pm Bible Study	21 10am Bible Study	22	23
24 10am Worship 4pm Christmas Eve Worship	25 9am Christmas Day Worship w/HC	26	27	28	29	30
31 10am Worship w/HC						

THOSE SERVING IN GOD'S HOUSE THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2023

Sunday, December 3
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Jerry Sabrowsky, Dan Fibiger
Altar Guild:	Barb & Lee Gumm
Scripture Reader:	Mary Ann Fibiger
Door Locker:	Andy Fibiger
Streaming:	Todd Matte

Wednesday, December 6
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Andy Fibiger
Ushers:	Andy & Gina Fibiger
Streaming:	Madison Fibiger

Sunday, December 10
10:00 a.m.

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Dave & Sue Prange
Altar Guild:	Barb & Karl Kaeppler
Scripture Reader:	Sharon Werner
Door Locker:	Dan Fibiger
Streaming:	Austin Fibiger

Wednesday, December 13
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Ray & Shirley Ottman
Streaming:	Steve Perry

Sunday, December 17
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion
Children's Program

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Hazens
Acolyte:	Katelynn Regutis
Altar Guild:	Lynn & Gerry Luebke
Door Locker:	Diane Marotz
Streaming:	Thomas Yang

Wednesday, December 20
6:00 p.m.

Elder:	Todd Matte
Ushers:	Mattes
Streaming:	Grace Matte

Sunday, December 24
10:00 a.m.

Elder:	Steve Hazen
Ushers:	Steve & Diane Marotz
Scripture Reader:	Lee Gumm
Door Locker:	Ryan Brooks
Streaming:	Steve Perry

Sunday, December 24
4:00 p.m.

Elder:	Gerry Luebke
Ushers:	Ken Thompson, Bob Kuehlman
Altar Guild:	Rachel Johnson & Julie Steele
Streaming:	Noah Fibiger

Monday, December 25
9:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Lee Gumm
Ushers:	Jerry Sabrowsky, Dan Fibiger
Altar Guild:	Shirley & Ray Ottman
Streaming:	Todd Matte

Sunday, December 31
10:00 a.m.
w/Holy Communion

Elder:	Shua Yang
Ushers:	Andy & Gina Fibiger
Altar Guild:	Liz & Ken Buesing
Scripture Reader:	Todd Matte
Door Locker:	Steve Marotz
Streaming:	Thomas Yang

There are a lot of services in December. If you are unable to work your scheduled shift, please either find someone to switch with or contact the church office and Gina will help find a replacement.

Thank you to all of our volunteers for helping out during this busy holiday season!

