

THE PILGRIM HERALD

January 2018

PILGRIM EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

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JANUARY: THE INCARNATION OF GOD

“The Son of God did not want to be seen and found in heaven. Therefore, he descended from heaven into this humility

and came into our flesh, laid himself into the womb of his mother and into the manger and went on to the cross.”

[Martin Luther, Christmas Sermon, 1543]

The Word made flesh gives us a truly a new day, a new year, a new life. God became Man. These simple words spell out the deepest mystery in heaven and on earth. No eye has seen. No ear has heard such holy mysteries. They are beyond the wisest minds and they lie completely hidden to our advancing age of technology. But that which man is unable to figure out, God has revealed in His grace and mercy. He has freely revealed His divine heart and love in such a way that even little children can confess them. To those who walked along the roads of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Galilee, Jesus would say, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see.” And to us who have come to faith through these eye-witnesses, He says, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” On this holy mystery of the Word made flesh depends our whole salvation.

Pagan mythologies are full of demigods, legendary half-divine and half human beings. The true God-Man, Jesus, is nothing like that. Jesus is nothing of the sorts. Not half God and half man. He is, as we confess in the Small Catechism, “true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary.” In Him dwells not some divine spark, but rather He is the fullness of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the flesh.

It seems self-evident to us, obvious, that Jesus was a human being. What is far more difficult for us is that He was and is mighty God, who created the heavens and the earth. For the earli-

est Christians they saw it the other way around. For those who lived shortly after His appearance on earth, His imprint on their life was too vivid to lose sight of His divinity. For them, it was His true humanity that seemed less obvious. St. John had to rebuke in sternest terms the temptation to reduce Christ’s human nature to a mere illusion. “Every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.” Such a spirit is of the “anti-Christ.”

During the 4th century, a man by the name of Arius (along with his followers, called Arians) denied that Christ was really God. He was more than man, yes. But they said not quite God. When backed into a corner, these Arians were even willing to call Jesus “God” in some sense, yet they denied that He was really the one true God who created the heavens and the earth. Against their denials and outright deceptions, the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Constantinople (A.D. 381) put the biblical truth in the clearest language: “God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.” These great truths of the Nicene Creed we have solemnly confessed before God’s altar ever since.

In our day the “Jehovah Witnesses” have taken up the old Arian errors once more. They deny the Holy Trinity and the true Godhead of Jesus Christ. A mockery is made of St. John’s profound confession that “the Word was God” via the pretense that this means “the Word was a god.” The whole of St. John 1:1-14 actually consists of a sublime and glorious witness to our Lord’s true divinity. It culminates, now in full view of the Lord’s accomplished life, death, and resurrection, in the same confession with which it opened, “My Lord, and my God.”


For fear of misusing God's sacred name Jehovah (YHWH is as close as we can get in the English to the Hebrew original), the Jews had the custom of substituting another word which meant, "Lord." That custom was followed when the Bible was first put into Greek. "Jehovah" became "Kyrios" Lord. When the New Testament calls Jesus "Lord," that is the meaning. He is God, Jehovah. Old Testament "Jehovah" texts become "Kyrios" (Lord) texts in the New Testament, and are regularly applied to Jesus. The truth that Jesus is God is not found sparsely, here and there. Rather, it belongs, to the very core confession of the New Testament that "Jesus Is Kyrios." Here, in embryo, are our trinitarian creeds. There is only one Lord (Deut 6:4). Jesus is that one Lord, Jehovah, yet so is the Father and so in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God, Jehovah, is not one but three persons.

Blessed Christmastide,
Pastor Raffa

The January Voter's Meeting is scheduled for ,
Sunday, January 28, 2018 at 1:00 pm.

All confirmed members age 18 and older are invited to attend.

**"For
I KNOW
the plans
I have for you,"
declares the LORD,
"... plans to give you
HOPE and a
FUTURE"**
Amos 3:1, NIV



Board of Elders Meeting Minutes, Pilgrim Ev.
Lutheran Church
12/4/2017

The meeting began with prayer by Pr. Fisher at 6:30. Present at the meeting were Pr. Fisher, Pr. Raffa, Dennis, Dave, Ron, Tanner, Brian, Gary, and John.

Schedules were made through Jan. 14th. The next meeting will be on 1/8 owing to the New Year.

An elder-usher meeting will be held on Jan 20th at 9:00 for all elders and ushers.

Music was briefly discussed. Choir goes well so far. The elders encourage more to join, as it is a pleasant way to contribute music to the Divine Service. Similarly, we constantly encourage musicians to contribute their God-given talents to enrich our worship. If you are interested, feel free to inquire of an elder or pastor!

Bulletins were discussed. A few more will be printed if needed.

The website redesign is likely to be finished in early January.

Live streams are working well in testing so far; we will begin this in earnest in January, as well.

If you are willing, we are looking to find a few individuals capable of running the recordings of services and bible study. If you would be so kind, please speak with Dave Fellenz or any elder or pastor.

The processional cross is fully paid for.

The directory is in the proofing stage; please make any and all corrections to the pages posted in the narthex so that we may ensure accuracy within our ability. If your picture is not in the directory and if you would appreciate it taken, please ask an elder or a pastor about it. The finished directory will likely be printed in early January.

The elders are working through discussions of the pastors' salaries. We are comparing

them to the salaries of pastors within our circuit and hope to recommend a good and proper figure to the budget committee in the near future for the sake of planning for next year and so on.

The pastors and elders note their great appreciation to Ken, Jeff, Ron, and Dan (along with any others) for their hard work and sacrifices in making our directory!

The elders wish a fond farewell to Dave and Ron, who are finishing their terms as elders. We thank them for their years of faithful service and thank God for the blessings they have been to our board and our congregation.

Our book study was postponed owing to the time.

The meeting concluded with prayer by Pastor Raffa at 7:48.

Respectfully submitted,
Tanner Schmidt

Church Council November 13, 2017 Minutes

The Church Council November 13, 2017 meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by President, Jerome Sommers, who opened the meeting with a prayer provided by Pastor Fisher. Others in attendance were Pastor Raffa, Fred Leffin, Tanner Schmidt, Jim Behrens, Ron Virchow, Jr., Mary Lehtimaki, and Judy Frank.

Minutes from the October meeting were approved as printed.

Elders Report

Live streaming of church services concerns regarding announcements was discussed.

The Pilgrim Directory should be available soon.

The Elders have established service times as follows:

Christmas eve, Sunday, December 24: 9 am, 6 pm, 10 pm

Christmas day, Monday, December 25: 9 am

New Year's eve, Sunday, December 31: 9 am, 6 pm

New Year's day, Monday, January 1: 9 am

Work is being done to establish a church choir

Trustee Report

Looking into changing internet and phone supplier to Charter.

Annual maintenance of church and parsonage furnaces has been scheduled.

Quarterly fire alarm testing has been scheduled.

Board of Education

Christmas program practice will be mornings of Dec 2, 9, and 16, with the program at 4 pm on December 17th.

Pastor Fisher

- Continuing to teach multiple Bible and confirmation classes.
Will be teaching about the new Catechism in Bible classes.

Pastor Raffa

- Raised a concern about rare occurrences when the organists have not been paid for playing at a funeral.
A motion was made by Tanner Schmidt, seconded by Jim Behrens, and passed by voice vote that the church be authorized to pay the organists for playing at funerals in the event they are not paid by the family.

Motion passed to end the meeting. Pastor Raffa closed with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Behrens

Pilgrim Ev. Lutheran Church, Council Minutes,
December 11, 2017.

Meeting was called to order by President Jerome Sommer at 7:00 PM.

Present were Pastor Fisher, Pastor Raffa, Jerome Sommer, Fred Leffin, Mary Lehtimaki, Judy Frank, Tanner Schmidt, Ron Virchow. (Absent: Jim Behrens, Carolyn McAfee, Susan Stadelmayer)

Pastor Fisher opened with a short devotion and prayer.

President Jerome Sommer asked for any corrections to the last minutes of November 13, 2017. There were no corrections. The minutes were approved as printed.

Elders Report given by Tanner Schmidt: Items discussed were (1) Setting up a meeting with the ushers. (2) Choir in Church. (3) The new web site will be ready in January. (4) Live streaming church services will come soon after that. (5) The processional cross is all paid for. (6) The new church directory is in the proofing stage. (7) There will be discussion on the Pastors salaries.

Trustees Report: Ron Virchow stated that a few of the safety issues have been updated. The Spectrum contract has been approved at a savings of \$100 per month over AT&T.

Board of Education Report: No report. Sunday School program will be held on December 17, 2017, at 4 PM with a Chili supper to follow.

Pastors report: Pastor Fisher stated that he is recovering from his illness.

Ron Virchow was given a huge "Thank You" for his six years of service as a Trustee. He created and organized a Trustee's Book to help with maintaining the church and parsonages.

Jerome will be meeting with the new Endowment Committee members before the January meeting.

Unfinished Business: None

The January Voters Meeting will be held on January 28, 1918, at 1 PM.

Pastor Raffa closed the meeting with prayer.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

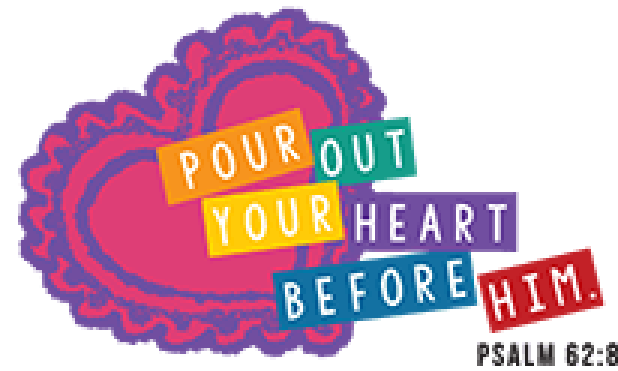
Judy Frank



Sympathy and Christ's comfort to the family of Marjorie Mehleis. Marge was called home to heaven on Tuesday, December 19, 2017. the funeral was held at Pilgrim On Wednesday, December 26, 2017.

Sympathy and Christ's Comfort to Nancy Rosenthal and family on the death of Mark.

Mark was called to his Heavenly home on December 28, 2017. Funeral plans are pending.



Welcome

We welcome to the Pilgrim family, Bill and Beverly Schepp. The Schepp's join us from Trinity Lutheran Church in Phillips WI. Let us all welcome them to Pilgrim.



Our Christmas Program "A SOLA Christmas" whose sections focus on the five solas of the Reformation was presented on Sunday, December 17th. The twenty-six children participating did a great job presenting this message. We take this opportunity to thank the children and their parents for the extra effort in memorizing parts, songs/hymns, and coming to the extra rehearsals. We also thank Pastor Fisher, Pastor Raffa, Sarah Spalda, Samuel Grosskreuz, all of the teachers, and everyone who helped with the program and Chili Supper and gift bags. Thank you to Timothy Grosskreuz and Rachel Raffa for sharing your special music. Thanks also to former students Joseph Heger and Ian Janssen for sharing your musical talents.

A big thank you to Dave Fellenz for assembling the stable, creating a display rack for our banners, and helping our sheep stand up.

After a break for Christmas and New Year's, Sunday School resumes January 7th at 9:15 a.m. Our Bible stories will be from the New Testament.

Jesus and Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10
 The Triumphal Entry
 Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-40
 The Widow's Offering Mark 12:41-44
 The Lord's Supper Luke 22:1-23

New Offering Envelopes have been distributed for 2018. Numbers have changed. Please write your name on your 2018 envelopes. Please discard any old envelopes. .



Have you ever considered becoming a pastor or deaconess? If so, Rev. Bill Wrede from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis would like to meet with you at Concordia University, Mequon on Monday, February 5, from 8 am. - 4 pm. in the Alumni Heritage Room, with a dinner with students at 5pm. Please RSVP to Pastor Mudge 262

-243-5700. Tuesday, February 6 at Concordia University Mequon, 8 am - 1 pm. in the Alumni Heritage Room.. Wednesday, February 7 Pastor Wrede is available in the Greater Milwaukee area. Please contact him at 314-750-5151 or wre-dew@csl.edu for an appointment and location.

Rev. Wrede is interested in meeting with prospective students of all ages — elementary school age through adults. Appointments are individual, informal, and family/friends are welcome to come with you. Appointments are not necessary but encouraged. If you are interested in scheduling a specific time, please contact Rev. Wrede at 314-505-7221 or wre-dew@csl.edu .

Get ahead of the winter blues! Join your sisters in Christ on Ja. 19& 20 at the Holiday Inn in Fond du Lac for the LWML SWD Winter Getaway! Highlights include showing the movie *The Green Mile* complete with popcorn, speakers, fun servant events, and more! An Ingathering of mittens and gloves (adult and children sizes), and disposable diapers and wipes will be taken! For details, go to lwml-swd.org and click on events/retreats.



IN OUR COMMUNAL PRAYERS

All servicemen at home and deployed, especially Isaac Wirtz (son of Rev. Nick Wirtz) who is stationed in Baghdad.

Lord God of hosts, stretch forth Your almighty arm to strengthen and protect those who serve in the armed forces of our country. Support them in times of war, and in times of peace keep them from all evil, giving them courage and loyalty. Grant that in all things they may serve with integrity and with honor; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Father of all mercy, You never fail to help those who call on You for help. Give strength and confidence to Your [son/daughter] in [his/her] time of great need that [he/she] may know that You are near and that You uphold [him/her] with Your everlasting arms. Grant that, resting on Your protection, [he/she] may fear no evil, for You are with [him/her] to comfort and deliver [him/her]; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

For our Seminaries, especially the Ethiopian Lutheran Church and Seminary

O God, through Your Holy Spirit You illuminate the minds and sanctify the lives of those whom You call to the work of pastors and teachers. Look with favor upon this seminary for the instruction and formation of those who are to serve in the sacred ministry of Your Church. Bless those who teach and those who learn that they may apply themselves with ready diligence to the knowledge of Your Word, which alone is able to make us wise unto salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Note: After much consideration, we have decided to add a page in the newsletter that lists all of those struggling with health issues. (Not published on the website). Each month we will also have various petitions that you can pray at home for various needs all people in Christ, and especially those within our immediate church family here at Pilgrim. In the bulletin we will list those sick and infirm on the basis of need and emergency. In the event that you would like to have your name or your loved one's name removed from the prayer list, please let us know.

THIS MONTH PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS:

Also those struggling with health issues:
 Dave Carey, Glen Zenda, Deb Sumner, Darlene Baerenwald, Sarah Kramlich, Granddaughter of Janet Meisenheimer, Chris Fornal Son-in-law of Nancy Scherer, Suzanne Stadelmayer, Claudia Spalda, Mother of Steve, Happy Bartes, Don Meisenheimer, Natalie Ruppier, Chris Held, Eric Johanan, Paul Grosskreuz, Orville Heckendorf, Audrey Vandlik (mother of Carol Heger), Joyce Talajkowski, Brooke Steiner, David Olson, Jeanette Guillaume, Diane Behrens, Karen Haufmann, Olivemae Olson, Donald & Annetta Teske, Nancy Nicholas, Donna Tessar, Jennifer Jensen, Scot Meisenheimer, Dorothy Young, Don Brockhaus, Wilma Wilson (Mother of Linda Stahl), June Fry, Ruth Mertz, Carolyn Bren, Judy Clark, Dorothy Miller, Mark Selzler, Linda Lukas, Marissa Flanders, Linda Schmidt, George Witt, Jenny Vickerman, Donna Sommer, Scott Biskobing, Laverne Gierach, Travis Winkler, Linda Borneman, Rachel Davis, Brian Vonlender, Glenn Schnabel, Inez Schwoch, Richard Reich, Judith Belling, Vanessa Kuehne, Jody Meisenheimer



- 2- Steven Wiedmeyer
Rev. Christopher Raffa
- 4- James Hanson
- 5- Inez Schwoch
Mikayla Wicke
- 7- Betty Schneeweis
- 8- Anne-Marie Gierach
Chloe Skrentny
Chevelle Madison
- 9- Samantha Spalda
Shawn Daley
- 10- Carl Steiner, Jr.
- 11- Dylan Zehetner
Ian Zehetner
- 13- Arlene Zicker
- 15- Olivemae Olson
Shelby Hepner
Dan Schmidt
Aubri Held
- 16- Cynthia Kemeny
- 17- Richard Spiering
Tyler Jakubowski
Anna Haas
- 18- Kenneth Heckendorf
Ross Hausmann
- 19- Michael Olson
Natalie Baker
- 20- Cindy Wiedmeyer
Susan Knuth
- 21- Nicole Zehetner
- 23- Brenda Doyle
Gary Knuth
Theresa Baerenwald
Julee Haas
- 24- Jeff Schneeweis
Jennifer Stange
- 25- Paul Liermann

- 27- Albert Frank
Patrick Horlamus
Sheryl Pajewski
- 30- Terry Mowery
David Moenning



- 19- Michael & Lorna Olson
- 25- Michael & Mary Schwittau
- 29- Donald & Janet Meisenheimer
- 31- Brian & Pamela Nitzke

ANNUAL REPORTS

Pilgrim Ev. Lutheran Church
Board of Education – Sunday School
2017 Annual Report

January-May 2017

We started the year lessons from the New Testament.

In March we enjoy a change from our normal routine when Carol Heger presented a lesson on “The Annunciation of Our Lord.”

May was a very busy month in Sunday School as many classes created Mother’s Day gifts in addition to our lessons and music. The 2016-2017 Sunday School year ended on May 21st. We recognized summer birthdays and presented Attendance Awards. Some of our Sunday School families participated in the Congregational Picnic & Backyard Bash.

September-December 2017

We began the 2017-2018 Sunday School year with thirty-six students. We gained several new students. Our focus was on Old Testament lessons.

Several students sang in church for Reformation Sunday under the direction of Carol Heger.

A SOLA Christmas was the title of our December 17th Christmas Program. We learned several new songs and hymns. The program was followed with a Chili Supper.

Respectfully submitted by
Diane E. Swanson

Sunday School Superintendent

Trustees Report

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2017 Annual Report

This year, the Trustees have discussed at great length setting up church vendors. These are companies that we contact for work that we cannot do ourselves for whatever reason. We have established, after much research and discussion, vendors for plumbing, heating and air conditioning. It is important, as we have been experiencing, to have pre-determined vendors who we can call in emergencies, if needed, and for preventive maintenance. This makes it easier for situations for which a more urgent repair is needed, to have a company we are familiar with and they are familiar with the equipment we have, instead of trying to recall who we had complete the last repair or picking someone from the phone book. If we would receive poor service from a vendor, we can always consider changing. We considered availability including off hours, manpower availability, labor rates and other costs, parts availability, insurance, and others. The Trustees and church office has the information readily available if needed.

Raffa Parsonage furnace repaired in January of this year after a pump failure twice. The city sidewalk repairs have been completed. This was for city sidewalk slabs that had rose up to cause a hazard, per city standards. The replacement slabs have been installed. The City of West Bend Public Works Department conducted an inspection of our water system for Cross Connection Control (contamination inspection), which there was found not to be any issues. Inspections for the fire suppression system and elevator lift have been completed earlier this year. We are currently in compliance with the regulations.

A “thank you” is in order to donors who paid for the installation of two new toilets in the ladies’ restroom near the church office (Room 9).

This was done without cost to the church. We had been having issues with these toilets for some time, with repairs being made, however, problems were continuing. The trustees had been discussing rebuilding or replacing the older toilets that were causing constant issues. The new toilets now have been professionally installed, and we expect that they should give us good service.

The air conditioner / furnace located on the west end of the new addition, was repaired. The three-phase motor had failed, and had burned a switch. This was repaired by one of our vendors. Preventive maintenance on the church and parsonage furnaces are set for November 16th.

There was some lawn tractor repair and preventive maintenance completed in house.

The Trustees approved the installation of a ethernet line to the balcony for the purpose of live streaming of the worship services to the internet for use by the shut-ins, etc. who have internet access. This is an on-going project. A new video camera was purchased to facilitate this project. This will allow someone who cannot be with us at worship, to be able to watch our service live or when they desire. There is more work to be done with it, but progress is being made. We thank those volunteers working on it for their dedication. We realize it is not an easy project with the hurdles that presented themselves, primarily with the internet and equipment. Testing of the live streaming video appears to be successful so far, and testing of the audio is in progress.

The Trustees have approved the three deceased ash trees in the front yard of the church to be removed by a church member as time permits. These are the trees by the memorial. The trees are victims of the emerald ash borer that has plagued our community in the past few years. We are also watching the ash trees behind parsonage one (Raffa residence), as they have also been affected by the same borer.

Drainage issue by the alcove between the main doors and the office door is being addressed. We are looking at different options for repair at this time. A temporary repair may be completed for winter, with a permanent repair possibly next spring.

A "thank you" goes out to Dan Shay for volunteering his grass cutting abilities and considerable time (in excess of 100 hours per season) in keeping the church and parsonage grass looking trim. This saves the church in excess of \$5000 a year when compared to having a commercial grass cutting service performing the task.

There have been questions raised by some members regarding the neighborhood residents who sit outside by our memorial. The Trustees are aware that they sit, visit, and smoke there. They are residents of the care facility across the street. They originally came over by our property, as they were discouraged from smoking on the facility's property. They are respectful of our property and do not leave smoking materials behind. They are friendly to church staff and people passing by on the sidewalk. We, as Trustees, do not see a reason, at this time to ask them to leave. They do prefer our property as they face away from the afternoon sun, and is directly across the street within easy access of their facility as some of them have mobility issues. We feel this is part of being a good neighbor in the community. If issues arise with the group, this can be revisited.

The above are a summary of the main concerns of the Trustees this year. We continue to strive for keeping the church properties in good repair with the funds available, prioritizing as needed. We would like to thank everyone who donates time and monies for the church upkeep. It is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ronald Virchow, Jr.

2017 Head Trustee

11/2017

Ladies Guild/LWML Annual Report

The purpose of our organization is to serve the Lord with gladness and to aid our congregation in any way we can. We continue to support the LWML with our Mite Boxes and offerings at our Rallies. We support Missionary Micah Wildauer who is serving in Togo, Africa. We also thank the congregation for their support in this effort. We continue to support A Place of Refuge.

In January, two ladies attended the Winter Get-Away and collected items from our members and the congregation to aid the Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter. The Lenten Prayer Service was held at St. John's Fredonia. Two members were able to attend.

At our February, we were pleased to have as our speaker, Adrianna Lubner. She gave a meaningful presentation on her mission trip to India. We also hosted the Ash Wednesday Lenten Supper... though the snow storm was challenging, we were able to serve 30 people.

April kept us busy with several events. Our Guild the church kitchen. Two members attended the Heart to Heart Event at Freistadt. We also hosted the Spring Rally for our Zone. Our own Abby Janssen from Pilgrim spoke about timely issues of caring for others including aging parents. 29 people attended.

In June we had fun at our picnic. Games and while elephant gifts were enjoyed. September brought our group back together with one member attending The Fall Retreat at Green Lake, WI. We were able to help Bethesda with out ingathering for the retreat. In October, 7 people attended the Fall Rally at Cascade. All who attended were touched by The Angel Hugs presenter from Plymouth, WI. This is an organization that supports families whose children have cancer. We made cards and collected gifts to help out the organization carry out their mission.

The Guild is always ready to serve meals for fu-

nerals. We want to thank all members of our congregation who have helped us in preparing and serving meals, baked desserts, and helped clean up.

Our Christmas Cookie Sale is always enjoyable and helps is supporting Missionary/Pastor Wildauer. In Dec., we have our Christmas Luncheon Party. We give thanks to God for the many blessings He has given us, Including our Pastors, Sarah, and our congregation of believers. We look forward to serving our Lord in 2018.

The 2018 Officers are...

President - Ruth Kohler

Vice -President - Julie Raffa

Secretary - Norma Benz

Treasurer - Beverly Hanson

Christian Growth - Jane Rockrohr

Sunshine Chairman - Barbara Jennrich

All ladies of the congregation are encouraged and invited to join us as we begin the New Year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ruth Kohler

RK/ss



For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given. Isaiah 9:6

Peace in Christ to you this holiday season.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support for our work here in Santiago, DR!

Sincerely,
The Preus Family in the Dominican Republic
David, Jenny, Hans, Rebekah, Rolf, Lena, Søren, Leif, and Andreas

Epiphany wonder



Today the Magi gaze in deep wonder at what they see: heaven on earth, earth in heaven, humanity in God, God in humanity, one whom the whole universe cannot contain now enclosed in a tiny body. As they look ... their symbolic gifts bear witness: incense for God, gold for a king, myrrh for one who is to die.

-Peter Chrysologus (5th century)

Resolve to “be there”

Let our New Year’s resolution be this: We will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word.

—Goran Persson

A penguin “parable”



During storms, emperor penguins huddle for warmth, taking turns at the center and on the perimeter of the group. While incubating eggs, up to 6,000 male penguins have been observed

clustering for shelter against the harsh Antarctic winter. Partially grown chicks gather in protective “crèches” (French for “cribs”); often surrounded by a colony of adults, these groupings ward off predators and cold.

In stormy times, humans also need supportive groups; we can’t survive alone. A church family allows us to take turns giving and receiving care. Amid social upheaval, injustice, illness, natural disaster and any loss or crisis, God invites us to gather for protection and warmth. In the church community, we support and strengthen one another and are empowered to go out again into the less-sheltered world.

A new you

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective.

—G.K. Chesterton

Three questions

There’s a tale of a traveling priest who was confronted by a soldier in pre-revolutionary Russia. Rifle in hand, the soldier barked, “Who are you? Where are you going? Why are you going there?”

Instead of answering, the priest asked how much the soldier was paid — and offered double if the soldier would challenge him with those three questions each day as he passed by.

Those three important questions can guide us on our journey through the brand-new year ahead.

For Christians, thankfully, the answers are clear:

- Who are you? “I’m a child of God!”

- Where are you going? “I’m going out into the world!”
- Why are you going there? “I’m going out of love for Jesus, who died for me!”

Place these questions and answers in a spot where you can see them each day. Then go forward confidently, knowing “whose” you are and what your purpose is.

“The Book Our Mothers Read”

We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;

And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from the quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.

—John Greenleaf Whittier

From the correct perspective

A child sat at his grandmother’s feet as she embroidered. Looking up, he saw a mishmash of threads and ugly knots but no discernible picture or words. “Nana,” he said with concern, “that’s not very pretty.”


“Come up here,” Grandma invited, “and look at it from this side. You have to see it from my perspective.”

“Oh!” the boy exclaimed then. “It’s beautiful!”

Seeing the world from our human, earthly viewpoint, we can’t grasp the masterpiece that God is completing. But when we finally see it from his perspective, we’ll discover that the threads and knots all contribute to a beautiful work of art. That work won’t be finished until Jesus returns, but in the meantime, may God grant us an occasional glimpse of the work in progress — from God’s side!

Puzzle!

The 12 Old Testament books known as the Minor Prophets aren’t unimportant — just short! Unscramble the names of these books. Then unscramble the circled letters to find a fruit of the Spirit.



Fruit: _____

LEJO _____

IHCAM _____

ABKUKKAH _____

DHAIABO _____

MUNAH _____

OAESH _____

AZAEHINPH _____

NJHAO _____

AGIAGH _____

OASM _____

AHRIZAHCE _____

IHCMALA _____

Answers: Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Nahum, Malachi; kindness, Hosea, Zephaniah, Jonah, Haggai, Amos, Zechariah,



PUZZLE

A NEW CREATION

The apostle Paul says everyone who believes in Jesus becomes brand new.

Directions: Cross out every third letter. Then write the remaining letters in the blanks to complete 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.

THIEROEFQORXEIDFAMNYAON
SEILSITNCVHRKISDTTBHEWNE
QWCDREYATMIOC�HFASWCOR
MEGTHWEOFLDXHASSGZONL
ETJHEWNEQWIDSHREROE

_____ ! 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, NIV

Answer: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV



NEW YEAR'S NOISE-MAKERS

Ring in the New Year with these fun noisemakers!



What you need:

- Wooden craft sticks
- Metallic paint (gold and silver)
- Paint brushes
- Jingle bells (gold and silver)
- Hot glue gun
- Metallic ribbon
- Scissors
- Adult help

What you do:

1. Paint half the sticks gold and half silver. Let dry.
2. Glue three bells to each stick.
3. Cut a six-inch piece of ribbon for each stick. Tie a bow and glue it to the noisemaker. Celebrate!