

GABRIEL'S GAZETTE

FEBRUARY 2020



*"Loving, Sharing, Serving
Jesus with you."*

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A Year Centered in Christ

Happy Epiphany!
If you said these words to your average person on the street, they'd probably think you were a little weird. Most people's lives aren't ordered by the Church Year. Most people don't even know what the Church Year is! Everyone's lives are patterned by work and days off, sleep and wakefulness, national holidays, and personal celebrations like birthdays and anniversaries. The Church Year takes our work, rest, and celebrations, and centers them in Jesus Christ, who is our life and our reason for everything we do. We have days of work, in which we worship the Lord by serving in our vocations, and a day in which we rest and gather to be strengthened and refreshed with God's Word.

The Church Year is the peculiar calendar celebrated by Christians since the days of the apostles, when Sunday became the new Sabbath instead of Saturday because it was the day of Jesus' resurrection. Right away, Christians marked the annual celebration of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, and later set dates to remember Christ's birth, ascension, and other holy days. By the 5th century, the western Christian Calendar was pretty well set. The Church Year begins in December with Advent and follows the life of Christ from His birth to His ascension to the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost. In the days after Pentecost until the end of the Church Year, we focus more on the teachings of Jesus for the life of the Church.

The concept of a church year was not invented by Christians, since we read in the Gospels that Jesus' life was profoundly shaped by a liturgical calendar. God had

commanded specific feasts to be held throughout the year, in which God visited His people with His grace and received their offerings. Jesus' family went regularly to Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 2:41). Jesus attended the synagogue or temple each Sabbath (Luke 4:16) and much of His ministry was connected to that day. Jesus observed the Passover (John 2:13-23), the Feast of Booths (John 7), the Dedication of the Temple (Hanukkah - John 10:22), and others. Jesus' miracles and teaching during these feasts showed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament rituals. Jesus not only fulfilled them, but transformed them. For example, Jesus is *the* Passover Lamb whose blood was shed for our redemption, and the night before, He gave the disciples His body and blood to eat and drink in a new kind of Passover banquet, the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The Church Year places us within the life of Christ. While we remember the saving works of Jesus in His earthly life, Jesus Himself is coming to us and giving us life and salvation. This concept is nothing new. The Jews believed that Passover wasn't simply a remembrance of the Exodus, but that in their celebration, the God of the Exodus came to them and renewed His covenant with them.

Because Christ has made all days holy by fulfilling the old covenant, we are not commanded by God to have particular feasts and festivals, but we are commanded to hear Christ's teachings and receive His sacraments. The Church Year gives us a good way to order our days with the life and teachings of Christ while we celebrate this divine service.

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A Year Centered in Christ

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I invite you to attend the midweek services in Lent (beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 26) and learn about the Old Testament festivals, which will give new insight into the works and teachings of Jesus, and Christian sacraments, offerings, and worship.

Pastor



JOIN US FOR
**MIDWEEK WORSHIP SERVICES
 DURING THE LENTEN SEASON.**
**WEDNESDAY EVENINGS 7:00 PM
 BEGINNING ON ASH WEDNESDAY
 FEBRUARY 26.**
 Come early for supper at 5:30 PM



Music at Immanuel is in full swing starting in February!

Toddlin' to Jesus is a free music class for children ages 0-4 and their caregivers. We will meet Tuesdays at 10 a.m. in the nursery. This session runs February 4th - April 28th. Please register with the church office, 872-4419 or immanuelutheran1237@gmail.com, or with Lisa Solum, 219-873-6420.

Instrumental Ensemble rehearses Wednesdays at 5 p.m. starting February 5th. If you have any questions call Lisa Solum, 219-873-6420.

Handbells rehearse Sundays at 8 a.m. starting February 2nd. If you have any questions call Lisa Solum, 219-873-6420.

Children's Choir rehearses Sundays after church or 11:30-12:15.

Adult Choir rehearses Wednesdays at 7 p.m. starting February 5th. If you have any questions call Deb Topolski, 219-877-5093.



Please join the Outreach and Assimilation Committees in our next CARD MAKING opportunity! We will be making

Valentine's Day cards for our shut-ins and Simeon Square Residents. We will meet on **February 2 from noon to 3 p.m.** in Fellowship Hall. A sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board. Any donations to help cover our cost of materials used is GREATLY appreciated!

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FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE . . .

Of the three things a person is not to talk about in polite company – religion, politics, and money – the church is called, in one way or another, to talk about all three. Perhaps this is the

reason why teaching about stewardship often seems to be an afterthought. It's something that happens only out of necessity when financial constraints are already nipping at the heels.

There is a more excellent way. Stewardship shouldn't be the kind of teaching that comes up only when there is a financial crunch. It should be part and parcel of the ongoing instruction of Christians as they live out their faith in their vocations – members of their family, their society, and their church. This teaching touches upon every facet of our lives; it stakes a claim upon our time, our presence, our prayers, and our possessions.

Stewardship begins with the acknowledgment that we are stewards. A steward is a manager of someone else's possessions. In Christian stewardship, we recognize, according to the Apostles' Creed, that God is the owner of all things as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And in His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, He gives us what is His to manage here below.

The principal virtue for stewards is faithfulness. As St. Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth:

"Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4:2)

Stewards must manage that which belongs to the owner according to the owner's wishes. That is what it means to be faithful in stewardship.

That raises a question: How are Christian stewards to be faithful in their managing of what God has entrusted to them to manage? In other words, what are the specific duties of a Christian steward?

This depends upon what God has revealed in His Word for each of our vocations in life as those in a family (fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children), society (governors or citizens), and the church (pastors or laity). The Table of Duties from *Luther's Small Catechism* lays this out in helpful and orderly way.

Let's look just at what the laity (hearers as it is labeled in the catechism) owe their pastors:

"In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:14)

"Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." (Gal. 6:6-7)

"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.' " (1 Tim. 5:17-18)

"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves." (1 Thess. 5:12-13)

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Heb. 13:17)

We can see that the Lord commands hearers to support the work of the ministry with the gifts God endowed them – their time, their presence, their prayers, and their possessions. This is the means by which God blesses His people with His gifts: the ministry with the support of those whom they serve, and the hearers with the work of the ministry.

St. Paul expounds upon this further in his letters to the church at Corinth. He instructs them to give regularly (1 Cor. 16:1-2), proportionally (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:12), and generously (2 Cor. 8:20) of our first-fruits (1 Cor. 16:2) with a spirit of eagerness (2 Cor. 9:2), earnestness (2 Cor. 8:7), cheerfulness (2 Cor. 9:7), and love (2 Cor. 8:23).

All of this teaching is set forth squarely within the context of stations to which God calls us. This is always appropriate for the church to speak because it instructs God's people in how they are to live out their faith as His stewards under those who are created, redeemed, and sanctified by Him.

- LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter, February 2020



Thanks to all who served in leadership positions for our congregation during 2019. The offering you gave of your time and talents has been greatly appreciated by us all.



Shepherds & Lambs

The Sunday School Newsletter

February 2020



On Valentine's Day, people celebrate friendships. Husbands and wives celebrate their love for one another. Children share cards with each other! Valentine's Day reminds all of us to think about the greatest love of all, a love so big, it's amazing! **Jesus Loves Me This I know, For The Bible Tells Me So!** Around Valentine's day, we also share those conversation heart candies. Some are serious, some silly! But suppose these candies had come to us from Heaven! Suppose God sent hearts like these to us. Ask your children this question. What do you think would be on them? If God sent these hearts to us, they would not be blank on one side. Do you know what would be on the other side? A cross! The cross tells us how much God loves us—without using any words at all! The Bible says, "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). Pray together with your children thanking God for giving us His love in Jesus. Then, give the children a few candy hearts to eat!

At our Christmas service, students presented CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD.

The children looked into the past at the events that happened in Bethlehem. They shared what they saw, an event at a time, as other students read the account of the nativity from the Bible. These students did a GREAT job with their parts and their singing was amazing!! If you missed it, I'm sorry you did.



Our students are missing Jill Palmer as she is absent and recovering. In Jill and Lynette's absence, we have a good group of volunteers coming in to help keep Sunday School running smoothly.

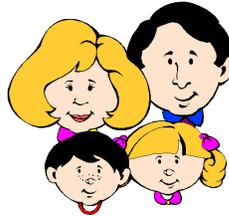
Thanks to Peggy Elser, Kelli Kalvaitis, Deb Topolski, Chelsea Romero, and our staff for pitching in to keep us serving the Lord and our Sunday School! We've got a GREAT group of people!! Thank you!!



Eleven students had Perfect Attendance in December.
GREAT JOB STUDENTS!

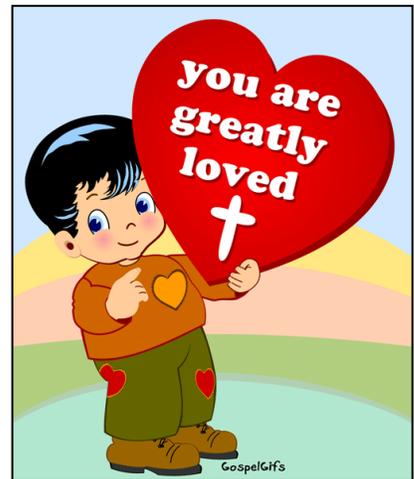


They say that the first five minutes of an interaction between people determine their initial relationship. This simple principle applies to family members as well. The morning family interaction sets the tone between parents and kids for that day. Snarls or complaints as the kids gather for breakfast will sour your relationship for hours. Encouraging words and positive interaction will be a better start to their day! Greeting children after school with kind words and a tasty snack may be remembered for decades.



Happy Valentine's Day to all as we think of how great it is to be called children of God!!

Lynette Johnston-Martin
Superintendent



FAMILY TIME: **ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN** **FAMILY TIES**

By Donna Streufert

"There's no rest for the wicked!" my Aunt Minnie used to say with a grin and a sigh as she tackled the family laundry or scoured her house from top to bottom. I don't suppose Aunt Minnie knew she was paraphrasing Isaiah 52:21. I'm sure she didn't realize she was trying to justify those long, hard hours spent caring for home and family.

To me Aunt Minnie was far from wicked – more like an angel – and certainly the cleanest woman I knew. Her life seemed so simple. She never learned to drive, so she never chauffeured her kids, joined community groups or was employed outside her home.

On Sundays she rested from her work, went to church and just enjoyed staying home the remainder of the day.

How things have changed! Most of us live at such a frantic pace we need weekends (even Sunday) to catch up. Yes, everyone has responsibilities. Everyone works, - even God! But God apparently knew when to stop, to rest, to take a breather (Genesis 2:2). God knew how to use rest for a holy purpose and, wonder of wonders, He invites us to share His rest. That sounds mighty good to me – especially after a hectic week.

Try some of the following suggestions to enjoy God's rest individually and with your family:

- ♦ Read from a devotion book or the Psalms. Sing a favorite hymn or Scripture song.
- ♦ Meditate on the gift of Jesus. Because He was faithful to the work God gave Him to do, we can be sure God loves us, forgives us and holds us close.
- ♦ Worship together. Make Sunday a special day after church too. Prepare lunch together with everyone pitching in.
- ♦ Reminisce. Look at old photo albums or scrapbooks. Count your blessings.
- ♦ Give you family a "day off" from chores. Go to a park, have a picnic, ride bikes, play a game.
- ♦ With young children or grandchildren, initiate a special "rest time" each day. Take 15 minutes to read a book, sing a few songs or sit together in a big armchair and cuddle.
- ♦ Take a nap. . .and don't feel guilty about it!

--Reprinted from *Family Connection*.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS !

The dates have been set for this year's Vacation Bible School:

July 6 -10



Program details will be shared as they develop, but mark it on your calendar now and save the dates. You won't want to miss it!

PLEASE NOTE:

The deadline for submitting items for the March *Gabriel's Gazette* is **Monday, Feb. 3.**

AN INVITATION . . .

All the ladies of Immanuel are invited to:



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH'S
70th ANNUAL VALENTINE TEA
February 8, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

There is nothing quite like an afternoon of music, goodies, tea, friendship and love, so please join us as we celebrate the memories of the past and look forward to making new friends and memories.

More information is on the bulletin board.

ASH
WEDNESDAY