

Announcements

- ◆ A warm welcome to all our visitors and guests, friends both old and new. We pray that God has blessed your time among us with His Word and Holy Spirit. We ask that you please sign the guest book at the back of the church, and we pray that our Lord would guard and keep you in His grace, mercy, and peace throughout the Days of Christmas and the New Year of Our Lord.
- ◆ In joyful celebration of the Holy Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we are gathered for the Divine Service on each of the Twelve Days of Christmas.

On **Monday** the 2nd, and on **Wednesday** the 4th, there will be a *Brief Spoken Divine Service* at 6:00 p.m. On **Tuesday** the 3rd, and on **Thursday** the 5th, there will be a *Brief Spoken Divine Service* at **9:00 a.m.**
- ◆ On Friday of this week, the 6th of January, Emmaus will be gathered for **the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord**, Divine Service beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- ◆ Pastor and LaRena Stuckwisch and family express their sincere thanks to the members of Emmaus for the thoughtful cards and gifts received this season, and for all the loving support throughout the year. The family is grateful for the kindness and care of their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ◆ The Altar flowers this morning are provided by Rev. Dave & Jane Seyboldt to the glory of God, in celebration of their 30th wedding anniversary.
- ◆ Please note that a new flower chart for the Year of Our Lord 2017 is now available on the bulletin board at the back of the church. You are welcome to sign up to provide flowers for the Lord's Altar to the glory of God, in memory of loved ones, or in honor of special people and events.
- ◆ **COLLECTIONS FOR 25 DECEMBER 2016: \$ 12,918.00**

In order to meet our financial obligations and commitments, an average of \$2360 is needed each week.

Offering envelopes for the coming Year of Our Lord 2017 are available in the glass room at the back of the church.
- ◆ **IN THE LORD'S SERVICE THIS LORD'S DAY:** (ELDER) Eldon Knepp; (USHERS) Aaron Seyboldt & Erik Horner; (ACOLYTE) Gerhardt Stuckwisch; (ORGANIST) Dcs. Sandra Rhein; (CRUCIFER) Luke Harrison; (GREETERS) Marilyn Dulmatch & Lois Veen.

- ◆ We are in need of some additional greeters to welcome our members and guests to the Lord's House on the Lord's Day. Please consider volunteering to serve and assist in this way approximately one Sunday each month.
- ◆ Rev. D. Richard Stuckwisch, Pastor Home Phone: (574) 233 – 0574

On the Church Year

“The popularity of the Christmas tree today is often ascribed to Martin Luther. Most likely it was during his lifetime that the lighted and decorated tree once again became popular after a long period of neglect. In any case, Christmas trees began to be common in Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries and spread to Scandinavia and England in the 19th. Even today they are alien to Romance countries like Spain and Portugal.

“The earliest American tree we know of was one in the 1820s at the home of a German professor at Harvard. Writing a decade later, his wife mentions that her husband had set up a tree for their son and that it had caused considerable comment. Apparently no one dared bring a tree into church for another 20 years. Pastors preached sermons to the effect that children should celebrate Christmas reading the Bible rather than dancing around a tree.

“The first Christmas tree we know of in a church was one put up in Cleveland in 1851 by a Lutheran pastor named Schwan. He nearly split the parish. Half his elders objected violently, considering the tree pagan. Scholar that he was, the good pastor dug up some ancient references to show that the use of evergreens was an old and established custom, and by the following Christmas he not only had a tree in church but also one in the home of the elder who had most strongly opposed him.

“Ask a child when Christmas ends, and the likely answer is ‘Never.’ In terms of the Christian year, that’s not bad. The spirit of Christmas runs through the Scripture readings and prayers from Advent until Lent. Originally the entire two weeks between December 25th and January 6th were the celebration of Christ’s ‘Coming,’ with Epiphany as a part of the Christmas cycle. In fact, the former name for Epiphany was ‘Old Christmas.’

“Epiphany now seems to be somewhat of an orphan as far as the Western church year is concerned, though at one time it was second only to Easter. To us it lies in the shadow of Christmas, though it is nonetheless the second great festival of the Christmas cycle, or in one of its older names, ‘Old Christmas.’

“Epiphany was of course at one time the Feast of the Nativity. According to the Egyptian calendar, which was 12 days behind the Julian one used at Rome, the winter solstice fell on January 6th, and the birth of Christ was tied in with the pagan festivals honoring the sun, as would happen a century later in the West. In Asia Minor and Egypt it originally recalled not merely the appearance of Christ in human flesh — His Nativity — but several other historically distinct events: His Baptism in the Jordan and the Wedding at Cana.

“The word epiphany means a showing, a manifestation, an appearance. Frequently the word represented the official visit of a prince or emperor. The root meaning came from ‘sunrise,’ or ‘dawn,’ and thus carried out the identical theme we saw in the Christmas Collects — once a popular time to receive (baptize) new members — not called catechumens (‘those who had been instructed’) as in the West but illuminandi (‘those who were to be enlightened,’ by Christ, the Light of the world and the unconquerable Sun).

“Epiphany also bore such names as the Feast of the Manifestation, the Theophany (‘Appearing of God’), the Appearing of Christ, or the Feast of Light. The reading from Isaiah (60:1) for the day still reflects its connection with light and with the sun: ‘Arise, shine, for Thy light is come.’

“In the East the mood of the day accented both Christ’s incarnation and the beginning of His public ministry — first His Baptism, as a kind of installation, and then the turning of water into wine at Cana, His first miracle. These events may have been stressed to counteract the growing influence of the Gnostics, who spurned anything material.

“These Gnostics, or ‘Knowers,’ were an early sect who tried to ‘spiritualize’ Christ’s coming. They did not accept the claim that the Son of God was really born to His mother. They taught that the ‘birth of His divinity’ began only with His baptism, i.e., when the Spirit descended upon the human Jesus. They would also have denied Christ’s turning water into real wine, which did not seem ‘spiritual’ enough to them.

“By the middle of the fourth century, at least in the West, Christmas had begun to overtake Epiphany as the day on which the faithful remembered the Nativity. Rome celebrated both festivals but gradually changed the nature of Epiphany. About this time it also included in the pericopes the story of the visit of the Wise Men, perhaps because the legendary relics of the Magi had at that time been transferred from Constantinople to Milan.”

(From THE YEAR OF THE LORD, by Theodore J. Kleinmans, CPH 1967)

Walking with Our Savior this Week

TODAY **THE FEAST OF THE NAME & CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS**

Divine Service of Communion **9:00 a.m.**

MONDAY *Brief Spoken Divine Service* *6:00 p.m.*

TUESDAY *Brief Spoken Divine Service* *9:00 a.m.*

WEDNESDAY *Brief Spoken Divine Service* *6:00 p.m.*

THURSDAY *Brief Spoken Divine Service* *9:00 a.m.*

FRIDAY **THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD**

Divine Service of Communion **6:00 p.m.**

NEXT SUNDAY **THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD**

Divine Service of Communion **9:00 a.m.**

— *with the Rite of Confirmation*

Coffee & Refreshments 10:30 a.m.

Catechesis / Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

You may also want to keep in mind, in your observance of daily prayer at home:

This Friday (6 January) is the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord

Readings: Isaiah 60:1–6; Ephesians 3:1–12; and St. Matt. 2:1–12

The Appointed Readings for next Sunday, the First after the Epiphany:

Isaiah 42:1–9; Romans 6:1–11; and Saint Matthew 3:13–17