

Shepherd's Staff

VOLUME 57 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2015

SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH

A member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

SHARING
GOD'S
LOVE

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CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES

Please see
the latest

council minutes lo-
cated on the bulletin
board in the church
library.

Dear friends in Christ,

Happy New Year ... and a blessed Epiphany season to each of you!

While serving a congregation in western Iowa some years ago, I remember fondly a celebration of Epiphany unlike any I had known before. My student intern that year, Althea Sondahl, told me it had long been a tradition in her family to build a bonfire outdoors and burn their Christmas tree on Epiphany. She asked if we could do that at St. Paul's. After getting the permission of the local fire department, we invited the congregation to join us outdoors in the church parking lot with their Christmas trees for an Epiphany celebration.

I recall that it was a bitterly cold night that January 6 so many years ago. Only a few of us showed up with our trees in hand. We gathered in a circle and one by one we tossed those old needle droppers onto the fire. In no time at all, the trees were up in flames. We said goodbye to Christmas and welcomed this new season of the church year. It gave us a very visible way to celebrate the coming of Jesus as the light of the world. We then went to Althea's home and there enjoyed a lovely candlelight meal with her family. It was an Epiphany I will never forget.

In the deep of winter, Epiphany comes as a welcome sight. Epiphany means "showing forth" and it recalls the story of the magi from foreign lands who follow the star as they go to worship the Christ child. They are travelers from the East and come bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold was given to honor Jesus as King; frankincense to worship Jesus as divine; and myrrh, a gift symbolic of readying Jesus for his death. In this season of the church year, we celebrate the in-breaking of God's light on the world. The scripture readings throughout the season will help us understand that God's love in Christ has been given for all people everywhere, not for just a select few.

As we gather for worship throughout the Epiphany season, let us recall the gifts the wise men of old brought to the Christ child. Let us consider how we, too, can bear witness to Christ through the sharing of our gifts of time, talent & treasure. As Christians, let us answer God's call to "Let our lights shine!"

Walking with you in the light of Christ,

Pastor Marilyn



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

In Our Prayers: Joyce Hunt, Nevagay Abel, and Stu Hoffman undergoing treatment for cancer, Lisa (friend of Laurie & Mark Pellant), Mike, nephew of Anita Ralston (our custodian), Layne Knight (friend of Carol Bailey), Ruby Watson, Howard Gerke (friend of Carol Bailey), and all of our homebound church members.

Is God calling you to serve as a leader in the Northern Illinois Synod? Please prayerfully consider whether you might be willing to stand for election at the 2015 Synod Assembly for positions as Synod Council member; Committee member; or 2016 Church-wide Assembly Voting Member. For more information, go to nisynod.org/nominations.



READ THIS BOOK-Our library recently received a copy of "The Invention of Wings" by Sue Monk Kidd (author of "The Secret Life of Bees" from Liz Beale. She thinks it is one of the best books she has read and

recommends it highly. The book is a historical novel about the life of abolitionist Sarah Grimke, her sister Nina, and their family slave named Handful. Our library also has a copy of "I Am Malala." Malala recently was a co-winner of the Peace Prize in Norway.



OUTREACH

Tutoring and Reading Opportunities

Rolling Green Elementary School, at 3615 West Gate Parkway, is in great need of adults willing to help their students in Reading (the kids read to you and you help out with sounding out words) and/or Math. Sessions can be any time during the day and typically run 45 minutes. If anyone interested in helping with math, training could/would be provided since the way they learn math now can be different from what was taught in the past. For more information contact Terri Woodcock or Kay Brindle.

ANNUAL MEETING IS SET FOR JANUARY 25

The Annual Meeting of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church will be held on Sunday, January 25, 2015 at 10:45 am in Moline Hall. Primary items on the agenda will be the adoption of the 2015 budget and the election of council and committee members, as well as Synod Assembly voting members.

All confirmed members of the congregation who have communed and made a contribution of record during the current or preceding year are eligible to vote at this meeting.



SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY PRESCHOOL

The 3 & 4 year old classes enjoyed making Christmas gifts for their parents. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous new year. See you in 2015.

Thrivent Financial Members

If you are an eligible Thrivent member, you likely are aware of this easy, convenient way to help make a difference for organizations you care about. The Thrivent Choice program offers a way for eligible members to recommend where Thrivent Financial distributes some of its charitable grant funds each year.

Eligible benefit members are designated Choice Dollars® that they can direct, thereby recommending charitable grant funding for their choice among thousands of enrolled congregations and nonprofit organizations.

To date, Shepherd of the Valley has received Choice Dollars grant funds totaling \$ 667.00.

If you are eligible to participate in Choice Dollars, or are uncertain about your eligibility, visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or contact your local Thrivent Financial representative.

Choice Dollars designated to eligible benefit members in 2014 must be directed by March 31, 2015.

CALLING ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

Each Sunday morning at 10:45 am you are invited to the youth room for a forum led by Phil Smalley. Each week's topic takes a current event from the news & applies it to the scripture readings for the day. It's a great way to see how faith connects with daily life. Come join the conversation!

December Church Council Highlights

- Discussed our membership with the Rockford Lutheran School System. As a partner with the school, our students who are actively involved in the life of our congregation are eligible for an annual scholarship towards their tuition fee.
- Received the good news that our organ is working again, thanks to the many hours put in by Craig Bederka, Robert Fox and Phil Smalley.
- Heard that the Outreach Committee would like to partner with RALM (Rockford Area Lutheran Ministry) to package meals to help feed the hungry children of the world through the organization "Kids Around the World." This effort would take place in the fall to coincide with "God's Work, Our Hands" Sunday.
- Received an update on the Call Process. Members are encouraged to complete the survey that was sent out in the December newsletter as soon as possible. The Call Committee meets next on January 5th and would like to review the surveys at that time.
- Heard that plans are being made to hold New Member classes on Sunday mornings in January.
- Set the date for the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 25, 2015 at 10:45 am in Moline Hall.

What is Epiphany

Observed on January 6th, the Epiphany celebration remembers the three miracles that manifest the divinity of Christ. The name "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word *Epiphania*, and means "to show, make known, or reveal." The celebration originated in the Eastern Church in AD 361, beginning as a commemoration of the birth of Christ. Later, additional meanings were added - the visit of the three Magi, Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, and his first miracle at the wedding in Cana. These three events are central to the definition of Epiphany, and its meaning is drawn from these occurrences.



Sunset...A New Bible Study for Women

Might there be an interest in gathering with other women of the congregation for a Bible study after sunset? You know, at that time of day when life is supposed to slow down and you unwind from the day. It would be a time for connecting with other women, checking out God's Word together and figuring out how it can speak to our lives today. We have an active Wednesday morning Bible study at Shepherd of the Valley, but for those working outside the home during the day, this doesn't work out. That's why I'd like to offer another alternative time for a study.

The ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) publishes a wonderful resource magazine for women called "*Gather*." The magazine has many good articles written by women for women. It also has a monthly Bible study in it. This year's theme is on "*Transforming Life and Faith*." If you think this study is something you may like to attend, please send me an e-mail (marilynghanson@yahoo.com) or give me a call at the church and let me know. If 6-8 women decide they'd like to attend, we'll get the study started on January 22nd, the 4th Thursday night of the month, beginning at 6:30. We'll meet in the library.

Pastor Marilyn



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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

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Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday
 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Church Council

Nevagay Abel, Youth
 Kay Brindle, Outreach
 Carol Dahl, Fin. Sec.
 Janette Erickson, Fellowship
 Chad Farris, Property
 Lena Lund, Youth
 Robert Maness, Finance
 Vicki Nitz, Preschool
 Sally Schrader, Christ. Ed.
 Phil Smalley, Treasurer
 Bruce Solko, Personnel
 Soc. Min., Vacant
 Bev Wacker, Worship/Music
 John Wolf, Stewardship
 Terri Woodcock, Sec.

Staff

Pastor Marilyn Hanson, Interim pastor
 Judi Fields, Sec.
 Lynn McWhirter, Accomp.
 Linda Longardner, Accomp.
 Phil Smalley, Treasurer
 Susie Smalley, Music Director
 Diane Kirkland, Bell Dir.
 Patte Lund, Christ. Ed.
 Carol Dahl, Fin. Sec.
 Peggy Wenstrom, Nursery Attendant
 Tabatha Scheider, Nursery Attendant
 Anita Ralston, Custodian

NEW MEMBER CLASSES TO BE HELD IN JANUARY



Are you interested in joining Shepherd of the Valley or just reviewing the basic teachings of the Lutheran Church? If so, gather with me in Shepherd Hall on Sundays, January 5, 12 and 19 from 10:45 – 11:30 am. We'll do a brief review of Luther's Small Catechism, discuss the

components of Lutheran worship, and have an open discussion on questions participants bring with them to class.

Those wishing to join Shepherd of the Valley at the end of the three sessions will be received into membership on Sunday, January 25 at the 9:30 am worship service. A coffee fellowship and the congregation's Annual Meeting will be held in Moline Hall after worship.

Pastor Marilyn