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IN TOUCH

with the ministry and people of Living Word

Volume 31, Issue 2

January 9, 2022

"A Life Changing Journey"

The feast of the Epiphany, also known as the Twelfth Day or Twelfth Night, was established by the end of the second century and celebrated long before the feast of Christmas. As well as the feast, the term "epiphany" is used of a moment when one feels suddenly that one understands, or becomes conscious of something important, triggered by new information, which allows a leap of understanding.

Geography and Time

In Mt 2:1, we find Jesus' birth notice and an introduction to the characters. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, an insignificant village, about eight kilometers south of Jerusalem, the center of power. Bethlehem was the ancestral home of David and was where he was anointed king by the prophet Samuel. Jesus, son of David (Mt 1:1, 17, 20), was born there "in the days of King Herod." At this stage in the story we are given no information about Herod. However it is well-known he was a puppet of Imperial Rome and was notorious for his cruelty, political skill and massive building projects. Then the word "behold" (also used in Mt 1:20, 23) turns our attention to "Magi from the East [who] came from Jerusalem."

The Magi

The most accurate way to name the visitors from the East is to call them "Magi". To use "wise men" is too wide a term, "kings" is incorrect and although "astrologers" is nearly correct, it is confusing because of the meaning of that term today. The Magi were a high-ranking, priestly class of political-religious advisors who served the rulers of Media and what later became the empires of Persia (approximately the areas of modern Iran and Iraq). While they had access to the centers of power, they were sometimes seen as a threat to royal power because of their influence in predicting future events and their astrological knowledge. They were regarded as being able to recognize the signs of the times. The Magi from the East were Gentiles and they did not know the Scriptures. However they had alternative ways of knowing — the mystery of a star to find Jesus, and dreams to "take a different way" to avoid Herod. Matthew is highlighting that all do not come to Jesus by the same way. God uses unexpected means. This sets up what recurs in Matthew — Jesus, Israel's King, is recognized and welcomed by the least expected people.

The Magi come from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish history and tradition, which in Matthew's gospel is the stronghold of the corrupt political power and authority of the Jewish leaders. It does not stand for the whole Jewish people. There is a powerful/powerless contrast throughout Matthew — the lowly receive Jesus (his parents, the twelve) and the powerful reject him (Herod, Pharisees, Scribes, Pilate). Frightened that the Magi were seeking the new-born King of Jews, Herod calls in the Jewish leaders, who were colonized and subservient to Rome, to interpret the Scriptures. According to the prophet, a ruler will be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2).

"To Shepherd My People"

Herod sends the Magi to Bethlehem with instructions to bring him word when they had found the child. Setting out they saw the star ahead of them and followed it until "it stopped over the place where the child was." Jesus is not named but referred to as "the child" for the first of eight times in this chapter. This is significant, for in that cultural world often children were viewed with suspicion and seen as a threat to adult male civic order. They were weak, vulnerable and marginal, as are Jesus and the children massacred (Mt 2:15, 18) in the face of the murderous power of Herod.

(Continued at the top of page 4)

PRAYER CHAIN REQUESTS

Please call
Eleanor Galik
708-302-1686
for immediate prayers




Living in the Word...that the Word may live in others.

Living Word Lutheran Church

16301 South Wolf Road
Orland Park, IL 60467
708-403-9673
livingwordorland.org
intouchlwlw@yahoo.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Mon - Fri 9 am - 2 pm

SUNDAY SCHEDULE
9:00 am Adult study
10:00 am Worship

This Week At Living Word

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
9 9:00 am Adult Study 10:00 am Worship Church Undecorating	10	11 10:00 am PUSH 7:00 pm Council/Transition Team Meeting	12	13	14 9:30 am POW Bible Study Zoom and Living Word	15
16 9:00 am Adult Study 10:00 am Worship—COMM Congregation Meeting	17	18 10:00 am PUSH	19 6:00 pm Townhome Board Meeting	20	21	22

January Celebrations



January 8	Brad Kempke
January 12	Joan Fraser
January 16	Beverly Hodo
January 19	Dave Holloway



January 4	Eleanor Galik
January 8	John Paul Lange

Stewardship Snapshot

January 2nd

12 Worshipped, **12** Communed
2 Watched DVD's
18 Watched Online
32 Total

Financial Support

1,560.00 General Fund
 129.50 Poinsettias
 1,689.50 General Fund Deposit

Living Word's budget calls for weekly offerings averaging \$3654 to fund our ministry. Regular, intentional and meaningful contributions from what the Lord provides you helps carry this out.

Church Contacts

intouchlwc@yahoo.com

Ministry Support Coordinator, Diana Motel

dianamotel@yahoo.com 708-287-4939

Leadership Team

Neal Hartz - President	847-344-2410
Jim McKinney - Vice President	708-359-8527
Bill Merchantz - Treasurer	708-539-6027
Diana Motel - Secretary	708-287-4939

Members at Large

Pastor John Bucka	815-931-2961
Bob Grossart	708-870-0202
Paul Huang	626-551-1446

Living Word Endowment Fund

LIVING WORD ENDOWMENT FUND (as of 12/31/2021)

The current value of the fund is \$173,270.16 invested in Thrivent funds. Current market value exceeds cost of investments by \$40,993.28. Since inception (10/12/05), the Fund has earned interest and dividends totaling \$47,296.15. Of this, \$23,648.08 will return to Living Word for growth initiatives.

THIS REPRESENTS A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING!

To Date:	Total contributions	\$84,980.73
	Market value over cost	40,993.28
	<u>Dividends and interest</u>	<u>47,296.15</u>
	Total market value	\$173,270.16



HOW THE ENDOWMENT FUND WORKS

Contributions treated as donation for tax purposes. Funds invested by Thrivent Financial. 50% of interest and dividends available for church growth. Interested in estate planning? Call Tim Regan/Thrivent (708-326-4750). If any questions, call Bob Grossart

Important Information

TRANSITION TEAM UPDATES The transition team did receive Pastor Lesemann's decision regarding our call that we extended to him and his family. Unfortunately he has declined the call and we need to focus on the next steps in order to fill out the paper work to call a seminary student. The LCMS has extended their deadline due to the current pandemic and other delays, so we have until February 15th to have all the paperwork to be filled out. We need to listen to what God wants and let Him choose the right person for us.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING is scheduled for next Sunday, January 16th, immediately after worship. We received Pastor Lesemann's decision and need to have another vote for the direction that the transition team will need to follow. Please plan on attending this very important meeting. I will be sending out a separate link for the meeting that you will need to click on in order to view and participate in the meeting. We need to have a solid attendance and the majority vote for their next step. Both the transition team and the church council will be meeting this Tuesday both in person and via Zoom.

KITCHEN ITEMS NEEDED just a heads up in the coming weeks when you are out grocery shopping, we are running low on coffee and we are out of regular non-dairy creamer. Either of these items would be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

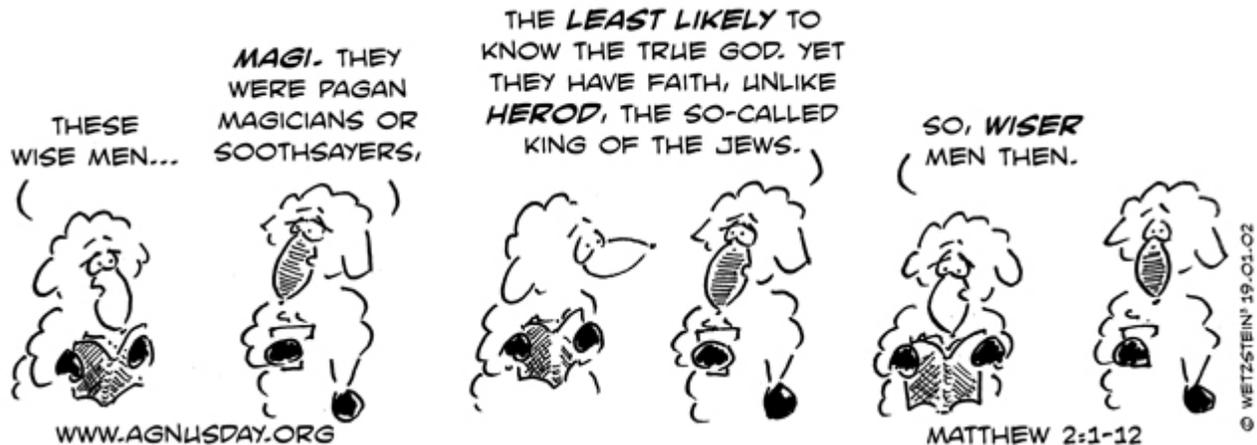
A NEED FOR YOU AND A NEED FOR CHURCH As church attendance numbers fade across the nation and online services become very convenient (who doesn't love not getting ready in the morning or leaving the home?!), it's important to remember why church attendance for you and your family matters so much. You can't serve from your sofa. You can't have community of faith on your sofa. You can't experience the power of a room full of believers worshipping together on your sofa. Christians aren't consumers either. We are contributors. We don't watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We do life together. The church needs you. And you need the church. Wherever you are, find a local church where you and your family can be part of community and use your talents to advance the kingdom and reach others. To come alongside one another physically, not just through a screen. While I'm grateful for technology to keep people connected that can't physically come to a facility or need to be away, it's absolutely not like being in the building. Never will be. Yes, church on the sofa is nice. But it'll never be the same as church in the sanctuary. We look forward to seeing everyone in church.

A NEED FOR OUR PRESCHOOL AGAIN Please try to help us pass the word about our preschool throughout our community. January and the winter semester is just right around the corner. We need to fill our church with the little ones and teach them the love and knowledge of Jesus and prepare them for kindergarten and grade school. Let all your friends and family know that enrollment is open online.

"A Life Changing Journey"

(Continued from page 1)

"Overwhelmed by joy" (Mt 2:10) when the star stopped, the Magi entered "the household" — not a stable or cave as the shepherds do in Luke's gospel. The Magi's actions of prostrating themselves, paying Jesus homage, and "opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh", evoke many Scripture references. They include the Gentiles' journey to Jerusalem to worship God (Mic 4:1–2), or the king as representative of God's justice (Psalm 72:10–11). The coming of the Gentiles is part of the vision of God's justice being restored on earth (Isaiah 60:14). On such journeys, Gentile kings bring gifts (Ps 72:10). Yet Matthew subverts these biblical traditions, for kings like Herod do not come to worship or welcome Jesus. Rather than the kings themselves, the marginal Magi, advisors of kings, come. And they come not to Jerusalem or the Temple but to insignificant Bethlehem. Rulers of this world, too, assemble against God's anointed One (Ps 2:2). In Mt 2:6, the new-born king will be a ruler who is "to shepherd my people Israel" (Mic 5:2), which suggests a very different model and function of power.



CHURCH UNDECORATING! Now that we have celebrated Epiphany with Sunday morning's worship service, it is time to take down the Christmas decorations. We will be doing that following the service on Sunday, the 9th. The more helpers we have to put everything away, the quicker we will get done. And I am sure there will be goodies for everyone to enjoy while working too.

FRIDAY Zoom Bible Class

POW (People of the Word) Bible Study has finished reading the study on Advent "Our Hope Has Come". They have gone back to their study on the Parables this past Friday. We are going back to individual links every Friday for the Zoom portion of the class. I will email the following link to everyone on Thursdays, so it would be very easy for you to find the email with the link in your inbox. Please see me or call the office if you would like to join, that way we can order books for you. Not only will you gain some insight with these bible study classes, but you will have fun doing so at the same time. **Please see below for the Zoom info for the Bible study on January 14th.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89514923805?pwd=SUg5V21gOXZyWmFaTFILdG9RNkNvdz09>

Meeting ID: 89514923805 Passcode: 372118

Join Zoom Meeting—One tap mobile

+13126266799,,89514923805#,,,,*372118# US (Chicago)

DEVOTIONAL OF THE WEEK This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah." - John 1:19-20 (NLT)
Obedience requires that we stay clear on what God has called us to do, and not try to puff up our status or authority. This year, remember that the presence of God encroaches on any authority we think we have. Recognize that God is the only real authority in your life, and live that way in His strength.

1-9-22 Message Outline

“Prosperity to the People”

Psalm 72 says: “May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.” What “hills” bring prosperity...?

1) I see Epiphany LIGHT above the hills of Nazareth.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you...³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Isaiah 60:1, 3

2) I inherit Epiphany RICHES from the hills of Jerusalem.

⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ. Ephesians 3:6-8

3) I discover Epiphany JOY in the hills of Bethlehem.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.” ⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.” ⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2:1-11

SUNDAY Zoom Bible Class

SUNDAY MORNING Bible Study will be on Zoom. We will have a dedicated link every Sunday for the Zoom portion of the class. Going forward, I will email this link to everyone on Fridays, so it would be very easy for you to find the email with the link. Please see me or call the office if you would like to join, we can give you the information that you will need for Zoom. Not only will you gain some insight with these bible study classes, but you will have fun doing so at the same time. **Please see below for the Zoom info for the Bible study on January 9th.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81081275354?pwd=TEd6ejdSaG1ueVdvWGxNZFkxR3lTQT09>

Meeting ID: 810 8127 5354 Passcode: 987694

Join Zoom Meeting—One tap mobile

+13126266799,,81081275354#,,,,*987694# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

Miscellaneous Information

2021 OFFERING STATEMENTS are now available and in the box on the desk located next to the office. Please re-view carefully and notify us of any discrepancies that you may encounter.

Donations for Living Word

EARNING OPPORTUNITIES Diana has more ways for us to help raise money for our church even if our Christmas shopping is done, there's still birthday shopping or buying gift cards for other happy occasions. With a mobile app, RaiseRight or the website ShopWithScrip, you can purchase gift cards for your friends, family, and even yourself and they will donate 3% of the sales to our church, I have screenshots from Diana below just to give you an idea of what it will look like, but she will also have all of this up on our website and Facebook page, and once the account gets set up, our unique code to use in order for the 3% is **YL5M6W4APYDX**. This is the most safe and secure way to buy gift cards these days, trust me, I was a victim of the money on a gift card being used by criminals. Even though I had the card in my possession, a day after it was given to me, the money was already gone, and it took me several calls and emails and a bunch of paperwork, and about 6 months later I was able to receive a replacement gift card with my name on it and for me to set up a pin on the card. Still be as generous as you always are, just be aware to do it safely and securely. So as you find more ways to do some shopping, stay nice and warm at home and do it from your phone or laptop and have the gift card company donate the 3% back to Living Word.

AMAZON SMILE will also donate some of the proceeds to our church when using that feature. Every little bit can go a long way for our church and our future.

Promoting Living Word

Living Word **Living Word**
Lutheran Church **Lutheran Church**



Orland Park



Orland Park

CAR DECAL CLINGS Help promote our church to the community and everywhere you go. Diana has made a couple of different car decal clings so that we can spread the knowledge and love of Jesus. She has both designs here on Sundays, and will be making more of each in the weeks to come. She has them in both black and white lettering. Please feel free to take as many as you need. If you are watching our service online, and still would like a car decal, please feel free to call me to let me know which ones you would like, and I can mail them to you. Thank you in advance for helping to spread the Word!

Mission of the Month



JANUARY MISSION OF MONTH is the LCMS Life Ministry. They speak up for life, care for people in body and soul and they teach about the sanctity of human life. The people of LCMS love children and families and they demonstrate this love through many acts of mercy in their communities. To help support these pro-life efforts, both big and small, we are collecting all month long, not only are you helping with whatever you can give, but our efforts will be doubled, as LCMS will offer to match donations this year, up to one million dollars. Please see the information that is posted on the bulletin board.

2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES are ready and available for you to pick up on Sunday. They are located on the desk next to the office.

POINSETTIA PLANTS are here and they are looking for good home, lol. If you ordered them, you can pick them up any time you want, or if you know of anyone who would like to remember the blessings of the season, you can give them one of the extra ones that we have left at church here.