

The Bethlehem Star

Empowered by Jesus to be His hands and feet, Bethlehem is a caring Community called to be His compassionate presence in this world and to build community by reaching out with the life-giving Word to those in our neighborhoods who are wearied and burdened by life's demands and changing Circumstances.

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
201 E. Watauga Avenue
Johnson City, TN 37601
Rev. Steven Harmon, Pastor

January 2021, Volume XXI, No. 1

Reach Up, Reach In, Reach Out

Epiphany

An epiphany is described as a new insight or “an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking an illuminating discovery”. The Epiphany is a day or time of celebration for many Christian religions because it is the time that Jesus was revealed or shown to the world.

On the day Jesus was born, not many throughout the lands knew of this glorious event. Wise men, shepherds, and others came from far away lands to worship the baby Jesus. It took many days of travel for them to arrive at Jesus’ birthplace. Traveling during this period was slow and done by riding donkeys, camels, or walking.

There were several wise men that had been sent by King Herod to find the newborn baby Jesus. The wise men “Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the east, went before them until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (St. Matthew 2:9-11)

In some religions and some countries, Epiphany is a day of celebration and is held on January 6th which is the twelfth day after Christmas. The focus is on the actual mission of Jesus’ arrival on earth which is one of peace and salvation for all people. Jesus offered salvation to all on earth. It was and still is up to each individual to choose the direction for his or her own life. In the end, each will be held accountable for his or her choice.

Some countries in South America as well as in Europe call Epiphany day the Three Kings Day or Kings Day. The name comes from the three kings or wise men sent by Herod to locate the baby Jesus. In some religions and some countries, the twelve day period from the birth of Jesus to His revelation is considered a time for the celebration called the Epiphany. The period lasts from the birth of Jesus on December 25th through the day Jesus was revealed on January 6th. The entire period is a time for celebration in various ways.

Throughout the world, Epiphany Day is held mainly on January 6th of the New Year. In some cultures and religions, it is held on a different day. Throughout the world, different countries celebrate Epiphany Day in various ways. In some cultures and religions, there is baking or partying. No matter what culture, country or religion, the reason to celebrate the Epiphany remains the same: The celebration of Jesus’ revelation to the people of this world.



Annual Chili Cook-Off
Sunday, January 31,
After late worship service



The annual Chili Cook-off will take place on January 31, and we need lots of pots of chili for everyone to taste and select the winner in this fun event. This is another major fund raiser for the Youth Group and it seems the competition gets stiffer each year. We look forward to YOUR participation. This event will take place after the late service. If you don’t make chili, please plan to stay for lunch and cast your vote and bring your favorite salad or dessert.



Notes from the Pastor's Desk

We are Jesus' hands and feet.

There has never been a time when I could say goodbye to the old year and never look back. Every year there were moments and events that I wanted to remember or wished to duplicate in the new year.

2020 has become the exception. I really want to close the door on 2020 and never open it again. I would like to say a not so fond farewell and never look back. That's what I would like to do. But that would not be wise. I need to focus on the lessons learned.

The first lesson is that we are not in control. That really is a no-brainer, but it has been hammered home in this past year. Decisions got made. Policies were formulated. Mandates were made. And at no time did anyone in authority ask my advice. Surprise!!

The second lesson, and it is the more important lesson, is how devastating isolation and separation can be on people physically, mentally and spiritually. The numbers for depression and suicide were way up in 2020 (and probably still are). Life in the public sphere has been impacted socially, economically and vocationally by the isolation that has been part of the response to the pandemic.

This is not going to turn into a tirade against the mandates put in place to cope with the virus. They were all put in place to slow the spread of the virus and protect those segments of the population most at risk. And those were valid reasons for such measures.

It seems to me that the focus needs to shift. We need to start paying more attention to the negative impact of isolation and separation. We need to be reminded that we have been created by God to be in community. Scripture is filled with that kind of language.

In Baptism, we have been united together with Christ. Each of us has become a member of His body – adopted into the family of God. We, who are many, have been joined together in one body – in that community.

In Ephesians 4:4-6, 14-16, Paul writes that “there is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, on faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. . . . Then we will no longer be infants, . . . instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

As we enter into 2021, we need to remember that separation and isolation is not part of God's plan. Even when there are valid reasons for that isolation, we need to remember that it is the devil who, like a prowling lion, seeks to separate the individual in order to devour them. We also need to remember that the Lord is our Shepherd and He is walking with us through this valley of the shadow of death.

The challenge for all of us is to work daily at saying connected with other members of the Body of Christ. Even as we continue to follow the protocols put in place to respond to COVID-19, we need to be intentional about maintaining those connections. We are a family and we need to look out for one another.

Phone calls, outdoor meetings (more practical during warmer weather), meeting for lunch, emails, etc. are options available to us. Participating in live-streamed worship at home is a great way to maintain the connection to the Body if you aren't comfortable worshipping in person. Even those who gather in person give evidence through air hugs and elbow bumps of the desire and need for us to be together.

Pray for wisdom. Pray for patience. Pray for courage and strength to do whatever God leads you to do to build each other up in love. And remember that God's Word is the light that goes before us and follows after us to guard and keep us steadfast in the faith and in union together with Christ and with one another.

The tomb is empty. The war is over. We are victors, not victims. Or as Paul writes in Romans 8:37-39: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We are fortunate that the call for distancing does not prevent us from worshipping together. As we answer God's invitation, here is the schedule of worship times. See you there! God comes and invites us to join Him in His house and at His table on a regular basis.

January 3 . . . 2nd Sunday after Christmas

8:00 am

SERMON TEXT: Ephesians 1:3-14

SERMON THEME: “Blessed in Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 1 w/ Communion**

10:45 am

SERMON TEXT: Ephesians 1:3-14

SERMON THEME: “Blessed in Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 1 w/ Communion**

January 10 . . . Epiphany Celebration

8:00 am

SERMON TEXT: Ephesians 3:1-12

SERMON THEME: “The Mystery of Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 3 w/ Communion**

10:45 am

SERMON TEXT: Ephesians 3:1-12

SERMON THEME: “The Mystery of Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 3 w/ Communion**

January 17 . . . 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

8:00 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

SERMON THEME: “Members of Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 4 w/ Communion**

10:45 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

SERMON THEME: “Members of Christ”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 4 w/ Communion**

January 24 . . . 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany

8:00 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

SERMON THEME: “Undivided Devotion”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 1 w/ Communion**

10:30 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:29-35

SERMON THEME: “Undivided Devotion”

LITURGY: **Divine Service 1 w/ Communion**

January 31 . . . 4th Sunday after the Epiphany

8:00 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

SERMON THEME: “Freedom or a Stumbling Block”

LITURGY: **Blended w/ Communion**

10:30 am

SERMON TEXT: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

SERMON THEME: “Freedom or a Stumbling Block”

LITURGY: **Blended w/ Communion**

Sew Crazy



Sew Crazy starts off 2021 with a new project for a new organization. The group will be making lined sleeveless dresses in sizes 1T & 2T to be delivered in March. The organization we will be supporting is the Pregnancy Support Center of Johnson County (Mountain City). This business is a non-profit & faith based supporting all stages of women during their pregnancy and the first year of the child's life. Sew Crazy is free, open to all who sew or who would like to help out in other ways.

Sew Crazy is free - working from donations of fabric, thread, etc. If you have something you think the group might use, please contact us. We can either pick up directly or you can drop off at the church.

<http://www.sew-crazy.org>

and we are also active on Facebook.

Search Sew Crazy.

Statistical Report for December

<u>Attendance</u>	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:45 a.m.</u>	<u>Offerings</u>	
December 6	28	46	General Fund	\$ 8,662.00
			Family Promise	\$ 100.00
December 13	27	40	General Fund	\$ 1,580.00
			Shaneyfelt Mission	\$ 50.00
			Family Promise	\$ 200.00
December 20	18	33	General Fund	\$ 3,578.00
			Shaneyfelt Mission	\$ 50.00
			Family Promise	\$ 100.00
December 27	14	32	General Fund	\$ 3,955.00
Advent Services:				
December 2		30	General Fund	\$ 1,385.00
December 9		32	General Fund	\$ 2,355.00
			Family Promise	\$ 25.00
			Woomer Memorial	\$ 25.00
December 16		28	General Fund	\$ 5,282.00
			Family Promise	\$ 250.00
Christmas Eve Service		81	General Fund	\$ 1,255.00
On-line Giving in December				\$ 1,580.00
Spending Guidelines approved for 2020			\$272,805.04	
Offerings needed each week in 2020			\$ 5,246.25	
Spending Guidelines for 2021			\$287,740.89	
Offerings needed each week in 2021			\$ 5,333.48	

Thank You

Thanks to all whose efforts who made our Advent and Christmas music so lovely, with special thanks to Pastor Harmon.



Mr. Campbell, our music director, is now accepting students in piano, organ and voice. Piano and organ may be taken for credit with Northeast State Community College or privately. Beginners welcome!



The Church office is open

Monday - Friday
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saturday:
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Susan is off on Thursdays
Pastor is off on Fridays
Voice mail and e-mails
are checked regularly.





Happy New Year, everyone!!!!!! Our youth have had some really good youth meetings in 2020. We look forward to 2021. We're in the early stages of planning a trip to The Bible Museum in Washington DC. We would like to open this trip with the youth to the entire congregation. If you would be interested in traveling with us to visit the museum, please speak with David Nutter. We have a very busy January planned for our youth. We'll have a general youth meeting on Saturday, January 2nd and Saturday, January 9th. We're planning a trip to Gatlinburg for the day on Saturday, January 16th. Our youth will do a little hiking, play putt putt, and go on a car tour of the old Gatlinburg. While we're there, we're going to be looking for ways we can minister to people by asking them how we can pray for them and then actually pray with them. We will also have youth Sunday on January 31st. Following the second service, we will have our annual chili bowl fundraiser. This is one of our biggest fundraisers and we hope that you will join us to eat chili and see who wins the coveted trophy that represents the best chili cooked. We will continue to have our apologetics class every Sunday morning at 9:15am. The following is what we have on the calendar for our youth group for this upcoming month.

Month of January at a Glance:

- Saturday, January 2nd Youth Group Meeting at Bethlehem at 6pm
- Sunday, January 3rd Sunday School Class from 9:15-10:30 Sunday
- Sunday, January 9th Youth Group Meeting at Bethlehem at 6pm
- Sunday, January 10th School Class from 9:15-10:30 Sunday
- Saturday, January 16th Youth Trip to Gatlinburg
- Sunday, January 17th Sunday School Class from 9:15-10:30 Sunday
- Sunday, January 24th Sunday School Class from 9:15-10:30 Sunday
- Sunday, January 30th Youth Group Meeting at Bethlehem at 6pm
- Sunday, January 31st Sunday School Class from 9:15-10:30 Sunday
- Sunday, January 31st Youth Sunday (both services)
- Sunday, January 31st Chili Bowl Fundraiser following the 2nd service

Serving This Month

	8:00 a.m. ELDER OF THE MONTH: Ted Wilson & Larry Larson USHERS	10:45 a.m. ELDER OF THE MONTH: Frank deNobriga USHERS
1/3	Larry Larson Ann Larson Adam DeMello	Lee Talbert Silas Whaley Robb Whaley
1/10	Tom Watson Ted Wilson Ann Larson	John Port Nick Leone Ben Wohlford
1/17	Ted Wilson Tom Watson Adam DeMello	Lee Talbert Dylan Treece Tim Treece
1/24	Ann Larson Tom Watson Larry Larson	John Port Andy Tester Nick Leone
1/31	Youth Communion: Ted Wilson, David Nutter, Christian Nutter	Youth Communion: Tim Treece Dylan Treece, Cary Allen

Altar Guild for January: Ann Larson & Marie Wilson



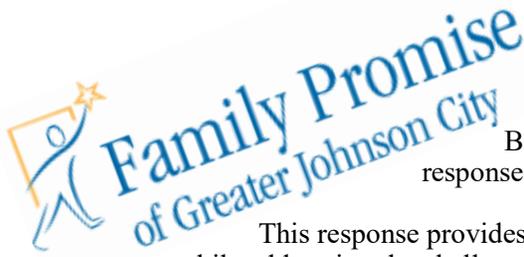
Happy January Birthdays to

Veronica Maupin & Barbara Fetzer (1st), Geri Swihart (3rd), Elizabeth Treece (6th), Elisabeth Wudtke, & Craig Campbell (7th), June Donaldson (11th), Grace Marshall (12th), Andy Tester (13th), Phillip Harmon (16th), Jan Miller & Haven Nutter (20th), Sandi Bailey (25th), Mary Lee Bowman, Ansley Nutter & Evan Harmon (27th), Vivian Marshall (29th)

January

Live Streaming of the 10:45 Sunday service will continue each week as well as the Live Streaming of the Wednesday night Catechism Class will resume in January.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Youth Group, 6:00 p.m.
3Worship, 8:00 a.m. Bible Study, Sunday School & Confirmation, 9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, 10:20 a.m. Worship, 10:45 a.m. Ensemble practice, 5:00 pm	4	5	6 Hand Bell Practice, 5:30 p.m. Ensemble Practice, 6:00 pm Catechism Class, 7:00 p.m.	7	8	9 LHM Class, 9:00 a.m. Youth Group to take down the Christmas Decorations, 6:00 p.m.
10Worship, 8:00 a.m. Bible Study, Sunday School & Confirmation, 9:15 a.m. Choir Practice, 10:20 a.m. Worship, 10:45 a.m.	11 Hands Up Board, 4:00 p.m.	12 Ladies Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.	13Hand Bell Practice, 5:30 p.m. Board of Directors Meeting, 6:00 p.m. Catechism Class, 7:00	14	15	16 Sew Crazy, 10:00 a.m. Youth Group to Gatinburg
17Worship, 8:00 a.m. Bible Study, Sunday School & Confirmation, 9:15 a.m. Choir Practice, 10:20 a.m. Worship, 10:45 a.m.	18  Martin Luther King Jr. Day	19	20 Hand Bell Practice, 5:30 p.m. Catechism Class, 7:00 p.m.	21	22 Prepare Lunch Bags for Melting Pot, 9:00 a.m.	23 LWML Zone Board Meeting, Grace, Knoxville, 9:00 a.m.
24Worship, 8:00 a.m. Bible Study, Sunday School and Confirmation, 9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, 10:20 a.m. Worship, 10:45 a.m.	25	26 Ladies Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.	27 Hand Bell Practice, 5:30 p.m. Catechism Class, 7:00 p.m.	28	29	30 Men's Bible Study & Breakfast, 9:00 a.m. Youth Group, 6:00 p.m.
31Worship, 8:00 a.m. Bible Study, Sunday School and Confirmation, 9:15 a.m. Choir Rehearsal, 10:20 a.m. Worship, 10:45 a.m. Youth Chili Cook-off after the late service						



The mission of Family Promise of Greater Johnson City (FPJC) is to help homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence. A network of 50 faith congregations (including Bethlehem Lutheran) and community agencies provide a collaborative response for homeless families with children.

This response provides an opportunity for homeless families to remain together as a family while addressing the challenges that confront them in obtaining housing. Many local shelters do not allow families (specifically fathers) to stay together as a unit, which is one of the unique aspects of this organization. Under normal circumstances, families stay at local churches on a weekly basis and they are provided with meals and overnight shelter. During the day, children are transported to school (if applicable). Younger children and adults are taken to the day center where they work toward goals, objectives and seeking employment.

Families receive counseling, access to a host of services (e.g. job skills training, etc.), and opportunities for growth with issues related to each family's specific needs. Part of the contract families agree to when joining FMJC is that they will actively seek employment, with the support of the organization.

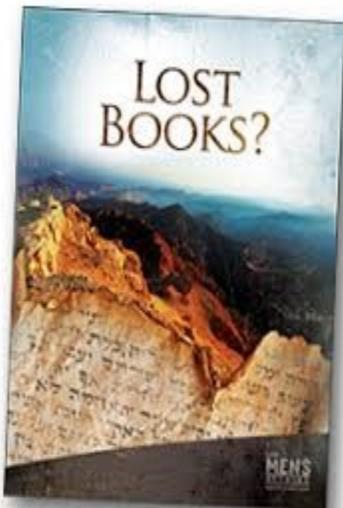
We serve as a support congregation to Grandview Christian Church, where the families actually stay during our assigned weeks. We provide meals and stay with the families two evenings per assigned week, typically Tuesdays and Fridays. We are also responsible for providing lunch items once or twice per year. Because of the pandemic, families are not being housed in churches yet, but rather are staying at hotels. Host and support churches are providing monetary donations for the hotel (\$411 per week) and for grocery gift cards. The present plan is that no families will be in person in churches until July 11, 2021 at the earliest. This plan will be reassessed in the coming months.

The weeks for Bethlehem to support Grandview Christian Church in 2021:
February 7-14 (donations only)
May 9-16 (donations only)
August 8-15 (August 10 + 13)
November 21-28 (November 23 + 26—this is week of Thanksgiving)

I hope you will consider donating or helping for this very important outreach for our congregation. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me! --Megan de Nobriga

megandenob@gmail.com
571-330-8914

*"Me and my kids were living in an abandoned building. Now we have our own house. I have a job. I just got a car. Family Promise did all that."
- former guest*



Lost Books ?

The second in the Lutheran Hour Ministries series on Lost Books is

Saturday, January 9th, 2021 at 9AM in the Fellowship Hall.

This session will focus on those books that were not included in our Old Testament canon and span the intertestamental period from the time of Malachi, the last Hebrew prophet, to the birth of Jesus. Discover why these books were not included in our Protestant Bibles along with some of the history that impacted First Century Christianity.

This study is open to everyone so come and join us and bring a friend.