

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Happy and blessed New Year!

First of all, many thanks to you for your kind generosity. The Christmas bonuses received by me and all the staff were greatly appreciated. It is simply a privilege to work at a church and to have employment serving the Lord's people; extra bonuses and gifts on top are truly a delight.

One of the things I am looking forward to in the year 2020 is the opportunity to travel. A small group of us will be heading to the Dominican Republic in January/February to visit the mission that we have been supporting there for years. Another trip I am anticipating will be to Israel in October. I hope several of you will be able to join me.

I was privileged to travel to Israel over 10 years ago when the church I served had a group that wanted to see the Holy Land. A few months ago, when some members of Lord of Life asked if I would consider leading a trip to Israel in 2020, I jumped at the chance. Visiting Israel is really a mountaintop experience. Let's face it, there are all kinds of places to see in the world if you just want a vacation, but traveling to Israel is something different. It's not just getting out of town, or seeing something historical, rather traveling to the Holy Land is both of these things as well as a pilgrimage.

For centuries Christians from all over the world have traveled to see the places where Christ lived and moved throughout His earthly ministry. Many of them wanted to thank God for what He had done and see for themselves the places where Christ lived and worked. Unfortunately, many others made pilgrimages in order to do acts of penance for some sin. This practice was the result of widespread legalism and works-righteousness before the Reformation. In other words, people would think: "If

I travel to Israel and pray at the tomb of Christ, God will recognize my sincerity and forgive my sins" – or some such thing. These misguided notions abound among people who still travel to Israel. They go expecting to have an emotional experience or thinking that in being there, they will come closer to God. They buy all kinds of religious trinkets and expect miracles, and some, I'm sure, come home disappointed, while others claim to have found what they were looking for.

Our theology as Lutherans does not sanction this kind of pilgrimage. Our theology is Biblical and nowhere does Scripture command followers of Jesus to travel to the Holy Land. Rocks and old buildings are not means of grace. God does not promise to increase our faith by means of a pilgrimage. [Incidentally, this is in stark contrast to Islam, which has as one of its 5 pillars, making the Haj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.]

But we confess what the Bible teaches, that God reaches us by means of His Holy Word and Sacraments. There, in the means He has given, He is present to bless. Of course, God may work outside of these things as He is not bound. He may at times send angels to convey specific messages as we just celebrated on Christmas Eve [Luke 2:10-13] and the weeks leading up to it [Matthew 1:20 ff.] But this isn't the way God normally functions and we shouldn't expect Him to work in this way. These things are recorded for us precisely because they are extraordinary examples of God's direct intervention with His people, but His ordinary means of dealing with us are the Word and Sacraments. God has given clear promises attached to Scripture, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. For example, "Do this in remembrance of me ... for the forgiveness of sins"

“Baptism now saves” and “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.”

That being said, and all superstitions aside, one can make a pilgrimage to Israel and truly have a blessed experience. This is something some of you reading this already know. Standing in the places where Christ lived and worked and seeing them with your own eyes can cause the words of the Bible to come alive in new and interesting ways. Places like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Capernaum are no longer just words on a page, but they are places you have been and have memories of. This, in turn, can help you to picture all of the people and events of the Bible not with dreamlike images you have seen portrayed in art, but with the real places you have visited.



Of course, one doesn't have to travel to Jerusalem to trust that the Christ was sacrificed there for our sins and three days later rose from the dead for our justification. A trip isn't necessary for faith or salvation, but it sure can be a blessing. If you would like to experience the Holy Land in October of this year, please pick up one of the brochures available in the narthex and consider attending an upcoming informational meeting this month for more info about the trip and Israel in general. The trip is open to anyone and you can invite friends or family members to join you. Information regarding the time and place of the informational meeting will be forthcoming. I'm sure it will be a good time and great blessing to all who are able to attend.

Blessings to you this New Year.

PrS



prepare for worship in January

January 5: Second Sunday after Christmas

Texts: I Kings 3:4-15; Eph. 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52
Hymn of the Day: “Within the Father’s House,” 410

January 12: The Baptism of Our Lord

Texts: Isaiah 42:1-9; Romans 6:1-11; Matt. 3:13-17
Hymn of the Day: “To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord,” 406 or 407

January 19: Second Sunday after Epiphany

Texts: Isaiah 49:1-7; I Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42a
Hymn of the Day: “The Only Son from Heaven,” 402

January 26: Third Sunday after Epiphany

Texts: Isaiah 9:1-4; I Cor. 1:10-18; Matt. 4:12-25
Hymn of the Day: “O Christ Our True and Only Light,” 839

....LIVE FOR THE
PRAISE OF HIS GLORY.



E P H E S I A N S 1 : 1 2

Lord of Life Small Groups

EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net
- † Will meet Sat., Jan. 18 at 2:30 PM

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meets one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

FRUITS OF THE VINE CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Scott Peters at 972-898-3351 cell or speters@planolutheran.com
- † Usually meets one Sun. a month at 5:30 PM

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Usually meets the 2nd Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

MIXED BLESSINGS

- † For info contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771
- † Will meet Sat., Jan. 11 at 6:30 PM

TWENTY SOMETHINGS

- † For couples and singles in their twenties
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com
- † The group is currently in transition, but has usually met on Sundays after late service

JANUARY

Birthdays & Anniversaries

1	Bob Nance
2	Stu & Sandy Ehrett (33)
5	Nolan Helms
6	Pat Montalbo
7	Carter Suarez
8	Lauren Chumbley
8	Linda Tischler
10	Sandra Paradise
11	Donovan & Nancy Cawood (12)
17	Bonnie Holtzman
21	Brian Hahn
22	Lora Frinsko
22	Kara Prescott
23	Noah Reinert
23	Luke Sowers
24	Kymberly Vess
28	Amanda Kunschke
30	Karl Olsen



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REMINDER

There are still offering boxes remaining outside of the church office. If you haven't picked yours up, please look for them there.

Serving in Worship in January

	January 5		January 12		January 19		January 26	
	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM
Elder	D Peters		Moudy		Read		Ziegelbein	
Common Cup	Kunschke	Hite	Read	Kunschke	D Peters	Moudy		
Altar	Lynda Abbott and Laurie George							
Acolyte	Kaitlyn	Sebastian			Josp	Luke		
Greeter	Martin	Dorak	Schrank	Rippey	Hampton	Manning	Vess	Bennett/Tyler
Sound	Moudy	Shaltanis	Wilkerson	Wolf	Wolf	Hite	Hacker	Reinert
Usher	Bunger Shaltanis Scarth	Ozlowski Oltmann Short	Paradise Read Frinsko	Moudy Carter Cruz	Prescott Ozlowski Messinger	Parish Oltmann Berger	Schrank E Hacker C Hacker	Strecker Buckmeier Short

FINANCIAL REPORT

January- November, 2019

		ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE
RECEIPTS:	Regular Offerings	\$504,461	\$525,033	(\$20,572)
	Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$504,461	\$525,033	(\$20,572)
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$505,112	\$499,428	\$5,684
	RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES	(\$651)	\$25,605	(\$26,256)

OTHER INFORMATION

1. General Operating Fund Balance	\$83,995
2. Dedicated Funds Balance	\$128,837
3. Building Note Balance	\$228,959