

EPIS⁺LE



*St. Paul's Lutheran
The Church On The Hill*

Volume 68 No. 1

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Pastor's Message

The Magi or Three Wise Men

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They

*told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:" **Matthew 2:1-5a***

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." **Isaiah 60:1***

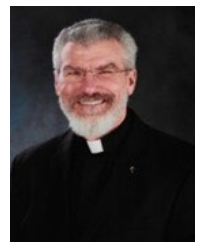
Christmas continues for six more days ending on the twelfth day of Christmas which brings us to the time of Epiphany. This was the time of the Wise Men who followed a great star in the sky which foretold the birth of a new king. But this was no ordinary king, the one named Jesus would be the King of all kings. Now the current King Herod did not appreciate the threat of a new king taking over his rule and set out to destroy Jesus.

Although we always see pictures and paintings of the Magi visiting the baby Jesus, we know it was long after his birth and he would have been a toddler of 18 months or more. This is what the Magi had told King Herod, and this is the reason Herod ordered all the male children under two years old to be slaughtered. *"A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."* **Matthew 2:18**

Many have tried to kill the Christ for two millennia, and have failed. It began with Herod because he viewed Jesus as a threat to his power. Over the thousands of years others have viewed Jesus the Christ as a threat to their way of life, power, and wealth. But all have failed to even slow down the spread of Christianity which has become the greatest and number one faith in the entire world.

God has stopped them through people like you who are not afraid to worship our Lord and Savior on Sunday. To hear the message of our gracious God who willingly went to the cross to save us all. Then to leave St. Paul's and tell it to others, spreading the good news. Merry Christmas and Happy Epiphany.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,
Pastor David Viles



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 6 Misty Schroeder
- 7 Ellie Kay Morgans
- 8 Brooke Steele
- 9 Marshall Griffin
- 10 Jenetia Gibler
- 10 Colin Walters
- 11 Lucas Carrel
- 16 Sherrie Hanks
- 20 David Russell
- 21 Kathy Meller
- 27 Briar Deaver
- 30 Kaitlyn Finch
- 30 Waylon Pistel

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Month/Day	Attendance Phys./Virtual	Offering
<i>DECEMBER 03</i>	<i>98 / 100</i>	<i>\$ 2,868.00</i>
<i>DECEMBER 10</i>	<i>79 / 140</i>	<i>\$ 3,357.97</i>
<i>DECEMBER 17</i>	<i>91 / 155</i>	<i>\$ 1,810.00</i>
<i>DECEMBER 24</i>	<i>117 / 207</i>	<i>\$ 6,578.00</i>
<i>Christmas Eve</i>	<i>103 / 194</i>	<i>\$ 3,673.00</i>
<i>DECEMBER 31</i>	<i>70 / 101</i>	<i>\$ 4,887.00</i>

Additional Income:

- Christmas Treats Envelope** \$ 178.00
- Christmas Offering Divided 3 ways** \$1,319.00
- Jr. Lutheran's Lunch Tree** \$1,000.00

In Appreciation to:

- Glenn Gibler** \$1,000.00
- Carol Beck** \$ 200.00
- Dan Weber** \$ 250.00

In Thankfulness for 50 years of Marriage:

Donald & Becky Weber \$500.00 designated to the St. Paul's Carpet Fund.



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 14 Kendall & Hope Stubinger 2006

Continued prayers for:

Jason Wood, Audrey Bunch, Richard Heidbreder, Royal & Evelyn Speidel, Carol Elliott, Donna Viles, Jean Fink, Julie Carel, Cecil Knernschiold, Linda Huff, and all we hold dear in our hearts.

Elroy Stubinger's son-in-law Larry Branson had triple by-pass surgery on December 30 and has returned home and doing well. Thank you to all whose prayers were answered.



Thank you Kathryn Linsenhardt for the beautiful Poinsettia display at the altar.



Congratulations

Steven Dunlap:

Son of Steven and Kaylin Dunlap.

Born December 5, 2023

Steven weighed 9 pounds 7 ounces and was 22 inches long. He is a big boy. Like father like son.

Congregational Council Meeting, December 11, 2023

† A regular meeting of the Church Council was called into session at 6 o'clock on the evening of Monday, December 11th by Council President Zola Finch. Present were Council members Jana Thompson, Delores Vlach, Frank Pascoe, and Zola Finch. Absent were Council members Stacy Bubach, Kent Nelson, Kathy Meller, and Dan Tschirgi. Also present were Pastor David Viles and Church Treasurer Kay Pascoe.

† The meeting began with a prayer by Pastor Viles. President Finch called for a motion to approve the previous minutes of November 13th, 2023. These were approved upon a motion offered by Jana Thompson, seconded by Delores Vlach and approved by all. The President requested Church Treasurer Kay Pascoe to offer a monthly report on Church finances. She presented a 4 page "Statement of Financial Position", dated Nov. 30, 2023. The statement showed a year-to-date balance of \$296,146.74 in all accounts. Questions were entertained regarding Whisper Net expenses, church Insurance bills, the amount in the organist's budget, and Pastor's 2024 suggested salary increase. After discussions of those items the President asked for approval of the Treasurer's report. This was approved upon a motion offered by Delores Vlach, seconded by Jana Thompson, and agreed to by all.

† The President requested Pastor David Viles to present a summary of his November activities. Pastor requested no mileage reimbursement for November. He listed eight meetings in his submitted written report, including Lions Club, area Ministerial Alliance, Lohman City Council, as well as four internal Church organizational meetings. Pastor attended the Thanksgiving Community Service at Trinity Church in Russellville. He prepared Sunday worship Bulletins and the December Epistle. All these items were prepared for e-mail distribution. There were two Communion Sunday Services, two non-Communion services, and one Thursday non-Communion service. Pastor also prepared Facebook entries for services and daily Facebook messages from St. Paul's. The President requested approval of Pastor's report. This was done upon a motion by Frank Pascoe, seconded by Jana Thompson, and agreed to by all.

President Finch requested the Council members committee reports:

Evangelism: [Delores Vlach] Delores reported the Fellowship Coffee Hour schedule for 2024 has now been posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. She asked that all interested parties check it out and get their preferred date on the schedule. If any party has a preferred date not on the posted schedule, get in touch with Delores or any Evangelism Committee member. For example, do we want two Fellowship Coffee Hours in June 2024, since the next is scheduled on the 4th of July? Other dates which might be altered are the Sunday after the chili supper, or the first Sunday in December since the Advent Dinner is the 2d Sunday in December. The first Fellowship Coffee in 2014 is scheduled for January 7th. Please sign up!

Technology: [Dan Tschirgi] Dan e-mailed his thanks and appreciation to Roger Pennell for the numerous times he has operated the video streaming service on Sundays. He asked the Council to discuss any ongoing issue regarding video/audio streaming.

Worship & Music: [Kathy Meller] Kathy e-mailed a summary of the December 5th meeting of her committee. Attending that meeting were members Carol Elliott, Erika Gerth, Abbie Linsenbardt, Katherine Linsenbardt, Frank Pascoe, Pastor Viles and Kathy Meller. Kathy's report explained that the Committee uses the "Sundays & Seasons" publication, an ELCA publication sent out to congregations to help each congregation plan their weekly services. The committee tries to select familiar hymns to our congregation or to the Committee members. The committee feels that a mixture of older as well as newer hymns will assure everyone can have a meaningful worship experience. Also, having a song leader helps people feel more comfortable singing. Her report noted that the altar angels will be moved during December to accommodate the poinsettias. Setting 10 will begin in January 2024. There will be two services on December 24: 9 a.m. with communion, and Christmas Eve services at 6:30 p.m. with communion. The Bell Choir will perform on Sunday the 24th. The Committee's next meeting is to be held on January 9th, 2024.

Church Improvement: [Kent Nelson] The carpet installation is scheduled to begin after the first of the new year. No specific date has been announced by the Sommers company.

Stewardship & Finance: [Stacy Bubach] Stewardship chair Stacy asked the Council to approve a change in the recipient of the Good Friday special offering. Contributions cannot be made directly to the Jefferson City Halo House, so the Good Friday offering will be given to the Mid-MO Foster Care and Adoption Center, and the 2024 church handbook will reflect the change. The change was approved a majority of the Council.

Mutual Ministry: [Jana Thompson] This committee met on November 15th. Four members and Pastor Viles were present. The committee heard that final colors have been selected for the new carpet. The suggestion from the Security Group that additional cameras and monitors may be needed was discussed, and the announced Dec. 10th meeting on Security issues. Church staff evaluations and staff performance were not discussed, as no congregational members' comments have been heard at this time. Background checks for our members who work with children may be arranged in the future. Most of our current members who work with children have background checks already on file. Chairperson Jana Thompson will arrange for those still needing background checks. Timing of the preparation and distribution of the annual Time & Talent questionnaire was discussed. A suggestion was made that the questionnaire be distributed both in person with the paper copy and on-line for those who might prefer that method. A pre-paid special phone line might be purchased to handle the Venmo calls for persons wishing to contribute to St. Paul's online. The committee also discussed the need to recruit new Committee members for the two new members needed in 2024. The next Mutual Ministry Committee meeting will be January 2024 at 5:30 pm.

Old Business: The President asked those present for their comments on the need for various new security methods, the need for the additional cameras, and monitoring means for the Church and Parsonage. Those present had varying opinions on what is needed and what is practical. It was suggested that several motion lights might be more useful to protect the back side of the Parsonage and Church building than additional expensive cameras. Council President Finch said that she will discuss further with the Security Team about conceal/carry concerns, and any liability insurance issues for those who do carry firearms. The ongoing subject of an enhanced Altar Guild was again discussed. Ways to enlarge the current Altar Guild and turn it into a Guild which not only provides altar flowers, the washing-up of communion wares, displays paraments, but also prepares communion on communion Sundays and other days on which the Eucharist is presented. Ways to present this urgent need to our congregation were discussed

New Business: The Congregational Annual Meeting will be held on the third Sunday in January, that is January 21st immediately after service. We need to encourage congregational members to serve on the Council. Kathy Meller, Dan Tschirgi, and Delores Vlach are those whose current terms will expire. Methods of recruiting members is of the utmost importance.

At 7:48 the President declared the meeting adjourned. Pastor Viles led the group in a recitation of the Our Father. The next Council meeting will be January 8th 2024 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Frank Pascoe, Council Secretary.

Hymn Selection Process: Kathy Meller

Recently the Worship and Music Committee was asked how we go about selecting hymns for our worship services. As our committee selects hymns each month, we use Sundays and Seasons which is a tool used to help plan our ELCA worship services. The song choices complement the lessons that are used each week. We try to select familiar hymns and if there are none from the Sundays and Seasons choices, we select from our Hymn of the Month list, uplifting song list, communion song list, or lists of songs that are familiar to us. Trust me when I say, we go through the hymnal always looking for songs that we feel are familiar to the congregation. Sometimes the words may be a little different or the tune may be different than what used to be sung, but we feel that using our red ELW hymnal is the appropriate thing to do. We hope that having a mixture of older as well as newer hymns will help everyone have a meaningful experience during our worship services. Also having a song leader hopefully helps people feel more comfortable singing.

Mobile Food Pantry: Audrey Bunch

The weather was good for volunteering at the December 12th mobile food pantry serving 181 families with 523 people in those families. Items given out were produce boxes containing (carrots, honey, mashed potatoes, milk, onions, parmesan cheese, potatoes, spinach, tuna), other items misc. cereal, frozen sausage patties, Bugles, and assorted canned vegetables. Volunteers from Lohman Lions Club were Gary and Alberta Zumwalt, and from St. Paul's were Rosemary Heidbreder, Dan Tschirgi, and Gary Bunch. Next mobile food pantry will be January 9th at 1:00 P.M.

Children's Sunday School: Pastor David

Children's Sunday school continues to be a great success under the leadership of Wendy Barker and AJ Ferrell. We are very excited about this program and look forward with great anticipation of what the new year will bring.

Advent Dinner: Kathy Meller

The Advent Dinner was held on the evening of December 10th. As the attendees walked into the Friendship Hall they saw beautifully decorated tables featuring red and white candles, greenery and red berries, red ribbon, and Prayer Rocks. Sparkling juice was served from 5:30 to 6:00. Donita Stubinger and Misty Schroeder graciously volunteered to prepare the meal featuring ham, hashbrown casserole, green beans, salad, rolls, and a variety of desserts with ice cream. The meal was served from 6-7 p.m. A special thank you to Glen Stubinger, Shane Russell and his son Connor for helping Donita and Misty in the kitchen. Thank you to WELCA for paying for the food to help defer the costs. After the meal, Pastor David presented the program Jesus Our R.O.C.K. (Relying On Christ the King). Several rock stories were shared by those that attended and songs were sung relating to how Jesus is our rock. The program ended with the singing of Joy to the World. A special thank you to Zola Finch for playing the piano for the program. At the end of the night, everyone was invited to take home a prayer rock from the table. The Worship and Music committee hoped everyone enjoyed this special evening.

Jr. Lutherans and Youth Group: Donita Stubinger

The Jr. Lutherans set up the little tree during Advent and Christmas to collect money to support the Cole R-1 School elementary lunch program. This mission will provide lunches to those children who do not have the means to purchase lunches during the year. In the coming year, we are planning to visit a nursing home, go ice-skating, and take the train ride to Hermann, MO. If your children are not involved with the Jr. Lutherans please consider bring them to our wonderful adventures.

WELCA Meeting: Donita Stubinger

The German Christmas Cookie Sale was a big success thanks to Trish Russell and her committee. We served several funeral lunches this year. The Samaritan collection box in the Fellowship Hall collected 290 pounds of donated food, which was taken to the Samaritan Center by Audrey Bunch. Refreshments were provided and served at our workdays for all who came to help.

Freundschaft Gruppe: Jeannette Fischer

Thanks to the 14 helping hands who helped decorate the Christmas tree and finish all other decorations on Saturday, December 16. Our load was made much lighter thanks to Pastor David who had arrived earlier, carried the tree upstairs and set it up. On Wednesday, January 3, we will gather at 3 o'clock to remove and store away all decorations and then treat ourselves to a wine, cheese and soup supper. Our regular meeting schedule will resume in February.

Margaret Circle: Erika Gerth

The celebration of Christmas is, without a doubt, a highlight of each year, and 2023 was no exception! Members of Margaret Circle arrived at the home of Debbie and David Boyce to find amazing holiday lights surrounding the house, and for a bonus, live deer were frolicking in the yard directly across the street. The festive atmosphere extended throughout the house and if we were not yet in the Christmas mood, this evening changed all that! Debbie had prepared the main course, and the rest of the group brought side dishes and dessert. Following the delicious meal and wonderful conversation, we settled down to learn about William Chatterton Dix, who in the year 1865 wrote the words to the beautiful Christmas carol "What Child Is This?" Unlike many writers of hymns at this time, Dix had been a successful business man. A near death experience brought about a spiritual renewal, inspiring him to write "What Child Is This?" and other familiar hymns.

Donita Stubinger continues to stay in close contact with the counselors at the Russellville schools so that we gain knowledge of students' needs such as supplemental lunch money and additions to the Buddy Packs. With deep gratitude to God for our many blessings, we designated the evening's offering to be divided between the lunch program at Russellville High School, Oaks Indian Mission in Oklahoma and Heifer International.

Thinking about the upcoming year, it was decided that Margaret Circle's officers would remain the same. We will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of February, April, June, August, October and December. As always, we welcome guests and new members. If you would like to learn more about Margaret Circle's activities, please join us on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 for the first meeting in the new year. We will meet at the church at 6:30 PM; Donita will host and Ruth Stubinger will lead the Bible study. All women and their friends are welcome!

Safety and Security: Jerry Koestner



On December 10th we were given a presentation by Gary Moore on what to expect and how to react to a violent encounter during Church worship. The details presented by Mr. Moore were sometimes graphic but also eye opening to what can happen. Many places of worship which have had this type of violence are small town, and small church congregations.

We can never know what or when to expect this type of situation, but through education and continued caution and observance we can be prepared and lessen the impact of such an encounter. Thank you to Gary Moore, the Safety and Security group, and to those who remained after worship for this presentation and the fine food afterward.

Christmas Caroling: Jana Thompson



On the evening of Sunday, December 17th, St. Paul's carolers traveled around the town of Lohman and the adjoining areas. Much fun was had in the decorated "Christmas" van, driven by Harry Thompson. The caroling was led by Dan Tschirgi, and the carolers used Zola Finch's prepared caroling books to assist in the singing of the Christmas songs. Those in attendance were Leroy Blochberger, Gary and Audrey Bunch, Laurie and Jahanna Koestner, Marie Scheperle and her grandson, Jackson, and Harry and Jana Thompson. Our escapade took us to several homes of church members as well as other community residents who appeared to be surprised and happy that the carolers stopped by to remember them. After

singing, the group ended up at the Thompson's home for pulled pork and sloppy joe appetizers and lots of Christmas treats and beverages, where Jerry Koestner was waiting at the house preparing for the carolers return. A fun and festive evening was had by everyone!

Choir

Our wonderful choir was back for the holidays and especially Christmas. We were joyful to have Dan Tschirgi and his trombone accompany the choir for one special event that was well appreciated.



Bell Choir: We love these kids and the skills they display ringing the bells. Even the two Big Kids!

Calendar of Events and Schedules

- January 3rd**, Wednesday: Take down tree and remove ornaments at 3:00 pm.
January 7th, Sunday: Children's Sunday School after the Children's Sermon.
January 7th, Sunday: Fellowship Hour in the basement, left over cookies and other items.
January 8th, Monday: Church Council meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the youth room upstairs.
January 9th, Tuesday: Worship and Music Committee will meet in the basement at 9:00 am.
January 9th, Tuesday: Food Pantry Volunteers at Trinity Lutheran in Russellville at 1:00 p.m.
January 14th, Sunday: Baptism of Ada Enowski, daughter of Maykayla & Harley Enowski
January 16th, Tuesday: Basement reserved for Lohman City Council meeting at 5:30 p.m.
January 17th, Wednesday: Mutual Ministry Meeting at 5:30 pm
January 21st, Sunday: Annual Congregational Meeting after worship.
January 21st, Sunday: WELCA Annual meeting following Congregational meeting.
January 21st, Sunday: Jr. Lutherans and Youth Ice Skating party: 1pm to 3pm.
January 27th, Saturday: Epistle Deadline for News and Articles.

Bulletins are normally printed on Wednesdays.
 Pastor David normally plans Fridays as his day off.

Usher Schedule

Jan. - 07	Jana Thompson	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 14	Delores Vlach	Frank Pascoe
Jan. - 21	Stacy Bubach	Kathy Meller
Jan. - 28	Kent Nelson	Jana Thompson

Acolyte Schedule

Jan. - 07	Mackenzie Linnenbrink
Jan. - 14	Oliver Stoermer
Jan. - 21	Madeline Stubinger
Jan. - 28	Morgan Schroeder

Greeters Schedule

Jan. - 07	Devin Koestner	Jacklyn Wood
Jan. - 14	Richard Heidbreder	Rosemary Heidbreder
Jan. - 21	Jacklyn Wood	Kent Nelson
Jan. - 28	Audry Bunch	Gary Elliott

Readers Schedule

Jan. - 07	Laurie Koestner
Jan. - 14	Nicole Benne
Jan. - 21	Jerry Koestner
Jan. - 28	Carol Elliott

Song Leader

Jan. - 07	Kathy Meller
Jan. - 14	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 21	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 28	Kathy Meller

Audio / Video Technician

Jan. - 07	Dan Tschirgi
Jan. - 14	Roger Pennell
Jan. - 21	Roger Pennell
Jan. - 28	Dan Tschirgi

Organist / Keyboard

Jan. - 07	Zola Finch
Jan. - 14	Zola Finch
Jan. - 21	Zola Finch
Jan. - 28	Zola Finch

Communionware for the Month

Kathryn Linsenbardt

Communion Assistants

Jan. - 14	Devin Koestner
Jan. - 28	Jahanna Koestner

Altar Flowers for the Month

Kathryn Linsenbardt

* Communion Days noted in Yellow