



Bethlehem Lutheran Church
5484 County Road E
Athens, Wisconsin 54411
Sunday Worship at 8:15 a.m.
Dual-Parish Office
Office Hours: M, T, W, F: 1:00pm to 4:00pm
Dual Parish Office: 715-352-2888
Dual Parish Email: secretary@bethstj.org
Dual Parish Website: www.bethstj.org
webmaster@bethstj.org

St. John "High Steeple" Lutheran Church
119415 Huckleberry Road
Edgar, Wisconsin 54426
Sunday Worship at 10:15 a.m.
Rev. Frank Giebel - Vacancy Pastor
Pastor's Cell: 715-298-0303
Church Office: 715-352-2888
Dual Parish Email: secretary@bethstj.org
Dual Parish Website: www.bethstj.org
webmaster@bethstj.org

Journey IN *Faith*

It is no secret that God calls us to be generous with the gifts He has given us. Throughout the Bible, we read that just as God has generously given to us, so are we to give generously one to another. As Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35) and "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

But God also calls us to give to Him. And He, who does all things well, presses it into service for the benefit of all the people of God. See for example what God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, after he and the people were safely brought out of Egypt across the Red Sea on dry land:

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breast piece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Ex. 25: 1-9)

Notice in verse two that the Lord instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to "take for me a contribution" and that from everyone motivated from gratitude for what God has just accomplished and given to them, Moses is to gather up "the contribution for me."

Pay attention, though, why the Lord wants the people of Israel to gather up these contributions for Him. God tells Moses precisely why: "let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." The purpose for the contribution of the Israelites was so that He may

dwell with them, that He would live among them. Through the tabernacle and the priesthood, through their rites and ceremonies, through their feasts and festivals, as through means, the Lord God, who brought them out of the bondage of Egypt would live and dwell among them and be their God, and lead them into the promised land, which flowed with milk and honey.

God dwells among us still. In the fullness of time, God's son was born of woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law. He brought us out of bondage to sin, death, the devil, and Hell, and He did this by His obedient suffering and death, his resurrection and ascension. But He is not gone. He dwells with us through the means of His Word and His sacraments, through the preaching and the teaching of our pastors, through the rites and ceremonies of our liturgy. He dwells with us in the Church through those means. And He is leading us to the true promised land, to the new heavens and the new earth in the new creation.

In the meantime, as God, even now, continues to call us to give to Him, let us, who have been saved from slavery to sin and death, the devil and hell, be so moved in our hearts as to give generously to Him so that the means of grace, the means of His gracious dwelling among us, would continue now and into the future. For just as He did then so does He do now. He presses the gifts given to Him into service for the benefit of all His people. He puts it to use so that we may have Him with us always, even unto the end of the age.

We are
g*yfed*
We are called

For the Man Who Hated Christmas

by Nancy W. Gavin

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas—oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it—overspending... the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma—the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears.

It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids – all kids – and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition—one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more.

Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down the envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit will always be with us.

Editor's Note: This true story was originally published in the December 14, 1982 issue of *Woman's Day* magazine. It was the first place winner out of thousands of entries in the magazine's "My Most Moving Holiday Tradition" contest in which readers were asked to share their favorite holiday tradition and the story behind it. The story inspired a family from Atlanta, Georgia to start **The White Envelope Project** and Giving101, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating youth about the importance of giving.

ANNIVERSARY ANECDOTES
Celebrating 150 Years (1869-2019)
FOUNDERS OF THE CONGREGATION

The origins of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church began with the migration of hundreds of Lutherans from Europe to America, seeking religious freedom. We are blessed to still have direct ancestors from some of the founding members in our midst, and through them and their diligent keeping of old records, we can learn a few more details about their lives.

It began with three small families: Hamann, Marquardt and Garbrecht. While we have no specific information about the Garbrecht's, it is known that the Hamann's and Marquardt's were part of the Lutheran emigration from Germany which had founded two Trinity Lutheran congregations in Wisconsin, one in Milwaukee, and the other in what was a neighborhood called Freistadt, which became part of the city of Mequon. Both of these congregations are also still in existence.

The Garbrecht family was two: Wilhelm and his wife, Albertine (born Werner).

The Marquardt family was two: Carl, a single man of age 22, and his sister, Henriette, who was married to Friedrich Hamann.

The Hamann family was five. There was a father and son, who both went by their middle name of Friedrich. Father Friedrich (age 56) came with his wife, Maria (born Krenz), and their teenage daughter, Friedricke. Son Friedrich (age 26) came with his wife, Henriette (born Marquardt, as mentioned in prior paragraph), and their daughter, Maria, who was only two months old when they arrived in the Town of Wien.

And to complete this circle of beginnings, it bears mentioning that Carl Marquardt married Friedricke Hamann on March 15, 1866.

It is known that the younger Friedrich Hamann travelled to central Wisconsin in 1857, purchased land in the Town of Wien, and then returned to the Milwaukee area to earn more money. While the group's exact date of departure from the Milwaukee area is not known, we do know that it took six weeks for them to travel from Stevens Point to the Town of Wien, arriving in May, 1860. They had to laboriously clear a trail wide enough to accommodate their ox-drawn cart.

The Hamann's settled on the east side of what is now Pioneer Drive, and Carl Marquardt settled on the west side. Pioneer is the first north-to-south intersection one crosses when leaving our current church and heading east.

At first the group met for worship in their quickly-built log cabin homes, and were visited occasionally by various pastors in the region. These visits were no doubt received with great and humble thanksgiving! As time went by more people came to the area and joined in worship, and the growing flock found a better space in a combination town hall/public schoolhouse which used to stand on Highway N, only about one mile from the Hamann homestead.

Reverend J.F. Wilhelm Hudtloff, from a church in the Town of Berlin, did much shepherding of the growing group and eventually helped them to become an officially-organized congregation in 1869. We do not know how many members were part of the 1869 congregation, but by the end of 1875, there were about 160 baptized members. It is amazing to think of the commitment of these settlers, most of whom came as farmers but had to first be lumberjacks to clear the land, and yet, how they dedicated themselves to their faith in God. Nor can we truly imagine a day in the life of the mothers who had to tend children and home, and constantly find food for the table.

There came a time of turmoil in this young congregation, which will be discussed in a future "Anniversary Anecdote", but it will be mentioned here that a re-organization took place, and articles of incorporation were newly-written and signed in 1885. Based on the members who signed that document, we have estimated that there are approximately 30 current St. John members who can trace a direct line back to those ancestors. But all members of St. John have their own stories of how they got here and where they came from. No matter the ancestries and no matter the stories, what truly binds us is that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ!

Bethlehem Items:

Bethlehem Quarterly Voters Meeting: The January Voters Meeting is on Sunday, January 20 after services.

Thank You: The Bethlehem Out-Reach Team would like to thank everyone who helped to make our "Live Nativity", Soup Supper, and Craft Sale a great success. It was overwhelming to see the many people who attended. It was a beautiful night to portray the "Birth of Jesus". The hot soup was a hit on a cold night, and fellowship was shared by all. God's Blessing to each and everyone of you this "Christmas Season"! God be with you all in 2019. Marlene, Dorean, & Jolene.

Poinsettia's at Bethlehem: Thank you to everyone who donated Poinsettia's this "Christmas Season"! The church is just beautiful! We pray that everyone have a Blessed Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. God's Blessing Marlene.

Poinsettia's Donated:

Del, Michelle Schwarting & Family	1
Clarence, Arlette Molthen	"Loved Ones" 1
Scott, Deana Parker	"Loved Ones" 1
Danny, Dorean Freimund	"Loved Ones" 1
Josh, Jill Penk & Family	"Loved Ones" 1
Verlyn, Judy Wittlinger	"Loved Ones" 1
Galen, Marlene Schreiber	"Loved Ones" 1
Russell & Shirley Buss	"Loved Ones" 1
Ed, Brenda Schmidt	"Loved Ones" 1
Chuck & Joanne Luther	"Loved Ones" 1
Richard, Lois Niemi	"Loved Ones" 1
Pastor, Sue Giebel	"Loved Ones" 1
Lynn Ballerstein	"Loved Ones" 1
Darlene Wittlinger	"Loved Ones" 1
Alan, Lori Schmitt	"Loved Ones" 1
Adam, Marya Viegut	"Loved Ones" 1
Shane, Patti Hammel & Family	"Loved Ones" 1
Virgil, Bridgette Underwood	"Loved Ones" 1
Randy, Chrissy Cook & Family	In Memory of Curt Suckow" 1
Randy, Sandy Reynolds	"Anniversary" 1
Ladies Aid	"For the Season" 2
C.W.I.A.	"For the Season" 2
Dave, Kathy Singstock	"In Honor of Chuck, Joanne Luther's 60th Wedding Anniversary" 1
Dave, Kathy Singstock	"In Honor of Ed, Brenda Schmidt" 1

Dual Parish Items:

Call Committee Update: In order to get the best fit for a pastor; the District office has given our congregations A Self Evaluation form for general information and a Congregation Survey given to members who wish to voice their opinions, and expectations of a pastor. The surveys to the congregation were due Sunday, December 16. The Call Committee will now go through all of them present a final list of expectations for a pastor.

On Sunday, January 20 we will present that final report at the Annual Voters meetings for the congregations to approve.

Once it is approved it will be sent to the District office, and then they will review it and compile a list of candidates which we will review and hopefully be able to choose one or more to issue calls to.

We ask you to be patient and especially to pray as we go through this process.

The Call Committee of Bethlehem and St. John

St. John Items:

Poinsettia's at St. John: To everyone who donated Poinsettia's thank you for making the Church look so festive this Christmas Season.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to All.

Poinsettias Donated:

Pastor, Sue Giebel	"Departed Loved Ones"	
Selma Miessner	"Departed Loved Ones"	1
St. John Ladies Aid	"In Celebration"	2
Peter Kroening Family	"In Memory of Maurice, Arlene Kroening"	2
Mel, Sharon Niemann	"In Celebration"	1
Kay Christiansen	"In Memory of Beatrice Richardson 100 years"	1
Arabella Syring	"In Memory of Rueben Syring"	1
Janice Brown	"Memory of Loved Ones"	1
Loren Wenzel & Gloria Newmier	"Memory of Loved Ones"	2
Paul Reinhart	"In Memory of Joanne Reinhart"	1
Roger, Sharon Ballerstein	"In Celebration"	1
The Krampien Children	"In Memory of John & Carol Krampien"	1

If you would like to take your Poinsettia home to enjoy for the rest of the Christmas Season feel free to do so.

St. John Annual Voters Meeting: The January Annual Voters Meeting is on Sunday, January 20 after services.

No Sunday School: There will be no Sunday School Sunday, December 30. We will meet again on Epiphany, Sunday, January 6, 2019 at 9:00am.

Bethlehem-St. John Quilters: Quilting will start Tuesday, January 8, 2019, 9:00 to noon Call Janice Brown 715-352-3056 or Joanne Luther 715-223-3410 for more info. Note: If you know of anyone who needs a quilt be sure to give them one. We wish to share warmth, love and comfort!

New Offering Envelopes: The 2019 Offering Envelopes are here. They will be in your mail boxes or on the library table in the narthex.

Sunday School News: St. John Sunday School is doing a "Giving Box" this Advent and Christmas Season. We will be collecting items for our 3 local food pantries to conclude on Epiphany, January 6, 2019. Grocery bags are available for you to take home as a reminder.

LWML and Sunday School collected Over \$75 at the Christmas Party. We will collect Sunday School offerings until January 6th, Epiphany and send them to the Orphan Grain Train, WI Division for purchasing DRY WALL for flood ravished homes in Southern WI.

Lost and Found Items: A red Wisconsin hooded zipper sweatshirt size L.

A navy blue Brewers cap, someone took the wrong hat, if you know of someone who accidentally grabbed the wrong hat let us know.

Left Behind in the Kitchen. There are glass pie plates and 1 large knives in the kitchen from the Harvest Supper. Please claim them.

Wood Available: An Elm tree and more need to come down!

Does anyone want the wood? Let the trustees know.

Mike Thompson 715-650-0240 Pete VanDerLeest 715-687-4615 or Anna Koepke 715-352-3087

Parade Float: We are looking for a wagon or trailer for the parade float. Needs to be in good working condition. Does not need to have a bed just running gear. If you have one that you would like to donate or sell please contact Mel Niemann.

BETHLEHEM

BIRTHDAYS

Clausen, Paul	1/2
Hammel, Patricia	1/7
Anderson, Keagan	1/8
Molthen, Arlette	1/10
Underwood, Virgil	1/11
Carlson, Luke	1/14
Graun, Thomas	1/14
Kilty, Braxton	1/19
Carlson, Philip	1/21
Marier, Melody	1/21
Reynolds, Randy	1/22
Denzine, Bryan	1/23
Kosik, Isaac	1/24
Freimund, Dorean	1/25
Schmidt, Luke	1/28
Ebben, Leta	1/29
Venzke, Thomas	1/29
Hammel, Olivia	1/30
Kilty, Troy	1/31
Venzke, Brandon	1/31

ANNIVERSARIES

Bruce & Jolene Gumz	1/12
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IN SERVICE JANUARY

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Greeters: Troy, Cheyanne Kilty
Elder: Del Schwarting
Reader: Jill Penk
Acolyte: Lydia Carlson
Projection: Alexis Gumz

Sunday, January 13, 2019

Greeter: Jason, Tammi McKee
Elder: Virgil Underwood
Reader: Lucy Geisking
Acolyte: Braiden Johnson
Projection: Ashton Hammel

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Greeter: Bruce, Jolene Gumz
Elder: Scott Parker
Reader: Deana Parker
Acolyte: Megan Kosik
Projection: Tammi McKee

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Greeter: Clarence, Arlette Molthen
Elder: Del Schwarting
Reader: Wally Sprotte
Acolyte: Halie VanLuven
Projection: Lydia Carlson

ST. JOHN

BIRTHDAYS

Koch, James	1/4
Wussow, Jennifer	1/5
Yessa, Raymond	1/5
Schneider, Lester	1/6
Schultz, Mary	1/7
Karl, Julie	1/11
Hippe, Richard	1/12
Krebsbach, June	1/13
Karl, Dale	1/16
Marshall, Elizabeth	1/16
Yessa, Kelly	1/17
Schafer, Matthew	1/19
Brown, Douglas	1/22
Yessa, John	1/22
Koch, Cole	1/24
VanDerLeest, Samantha	1/25
Rodman, Bradley	1/28
Heise, Paul	1/29
Koch, Kevin	1/29
Mortvedt, Bud	1/30

IN SERVICE JANUARY

Sunday, January 6, 2019

Greeters: Lind Mueller - Doris Scherr
Elder: Ron Hahn
Reader: Steve Schneider
Acolyte: Ethan Telschow
Ushers: Lloyd Schultz, Carrie Callies

Sunday, January 13, 2019

Greeter: Carl, Penny, Steve Jennyjohn
Elder: Ron Hahn
Reader: Lloyd Schultz
Acolyte: Natalie Thompson
Ushers: Lloyd Schultz,
Mike Thompson

Sunday, January 20, 2019

Greeter: Albert, Miriam Wolff
Elder: Ron Hahn
Reader: Paul Heise
Acolyte: Maryn Schafer
Ushers: Lloyd Schultz, Jared Reis

Sunday, January 27, 2019

Greeter: Bruce, Doris Wussow
Elder: Ron Hahn
Reader: Mae Morien
Acolyte: Alex Thompson
Ushers: Lloyd Schultz, Dennis Punke

Lutheran Hour Sermon Schedule

January 6

"The Word Turned Toward"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
People use their words to build bonds of trust with people they love. In Jesus, God does the same-He turns His Word toward us.
(John 1:1-18)

January 13

"Reason to Believe"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
Do you have a reason to believe that everyone should believe what you believe? John did. Come and see.
(John 1:19-51)

January 20

"My Delight is in Her"

Guest Speaker: Rev. Dr. Anthony Cook
As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, God rejoices over you. This week we explore our new name and identity as the bride of Christ.
(Isaiah 62:1-5)

January 27

"Surrender to Start New"

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
Starting a new life involves surrender-a break with the past. In that surrender, the past can be restored.
(John 2:1-25)

Lutheran Hour Radio Schedule

<u>Station</u>	<u>City, State</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>
WDLB	Marshfield, WI	1450 AM	Sun	8:00am
WRVM	Marshfield, WI	91.3 FM	Sun	10:00am
WRVM	Medford, WI	98.7 FM	Sun	10:00am
WRVM	Wausau, WI	101.3 FM	Sun	10:00am
WSAU	Wausau, WI	550 AM	Sun	8:30am
WSAU	Wausau, WI	99.9 FM	Sun	8:30am
WAXX	Altoona, WI	104.5 FM	Sun	6:30am

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