

# *Bethany Speaks*

## *November & December*

### *2017*



**November & December  
Worship Times**  
**10:15 Coffee Fellowship**  
**11:00 Worship**  
**12:00 Coffee Fellowship**

Bethany Lutheran Church  
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Website: [be-lutheran.org](http://be-lutheran.org)

Office Hours: Monday &  
Wednesday 10:30am-2:00pm  
*Bethany Lutheran Church's*

*Mission Statement*  
**"Proclaiming the Good News  
of Christ in Word and Deed  
through Welcome, Worship  
and Witness."**

Interim Pastor Warren Gzier  
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(906) 362-4217  
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*Bill Hartman, President*  
*Tamara Wommer, Vice President*  
*Bonnie Johnson, Secretary*  
*Jean Mitchell, Treasurer*  
*Gary Parkkonen, Council Member*  
*Christal Peterson, Council Member*  
*Dave Turri, Council Member*  
*Ellen Flack, Administrative Treasurer*  
*Linda Turri, Financial Secretary*  
*Julie Champion, Recording  
Financial Secretary*  
*Gary Parkkonen, Organist*  
*Mary Kerkela, Parish Nurse 906-361-0223*  
*Marilyn Warren, WELCA President*  
*Midge Waters, Librarian and Archivist*  
*Joe Zyble, Custodian*



Most years, my wife Kathy and I take a vacation in early November. It has nothing to do with hunting season! I think it started back in the late 90's when I served on the Board of Directors of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. There was always a meeting in November so we would drive to Chicago and then following the days of the meeting we would extend the time with some additional travel. Most years, pleasant weather has lingered into November helping to make it a nice time to get a break before Thanksgiving and the "Holiday Season" that follows. The one year we didn't go anywhere in November was three years ago. That was the year we got three feet of snow during the time we normally would have been gone. For your sake, I think it's important that we go so that doesn't happen again!

I have to confess though that I like November. I like the cooler days, I find beauty in the branches of the bare trees; I like the crisp, sunny days but even more I like the gray, cloudy days. Maybe having been born in November I have November in my bones.

To be sure, November is a time of endings, most notably in the natural world as the growing season comes to an end and the cycle of plant life goes dormant until spring. In church there are also endings to consider. For one thing, at the end of the month there's Christ the King Sunday that marks the end of the church year. In addition to that, on the first Sunday of the month, this year on November 5<sup>th</sup>, there's another reminder of endings with the celebration of All Saints' Day. For many, it's one of the

more moving moments of the church year as the names of those who died during the past year are read, sometimes accompanied by the lighting of candles and the toll of a bell. It does represent a reminder of endings, but it's a hopeful reminder as we celebrate the communion of saints that includes the living along with those no longer physically present.

As a chaplain for UP Home Health and Hospice, during the year I'm involved with other events that serve as similar reminders. Like All Saints Day, such events are important because death doesn't end our relationship with loved ones. They continue to be part of who we are and it's helpful to have rituals that intentionally bring them to mind and honor their memory. One result might be tears, but they shouldn't just be tears of sadness, but tears of joy and thanksgiving too. At some of the hospice events, people are invited to share a memory of their loved one and it never takes long for the mood to shift as one person's good memory triggers that of another. Especially in community, even as people are at various stages of grief, they know that they're not alone, that there is much for which to give thanks.

With our national day of Thanksgiving having become increasingly co-opted by commercialism ( i.e., Black Friday which now starts on Thanksgiving Thursday), it may be that we come closest to understanding what giving thanks is about on All Saints' Sunday. So... give thanks, and find joy in the beauty of November!

Pastor Warren Geier

## *Blessings From the Lord*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Offering</b>
09/03	29	\$1,132.50
09/10	29	\$1,547.07
09/17	30	\$967.97
09/24	21	\$736.84
10/02	19	\$2,000.00
10/08	28	\$1,445.00
10/15	22	\$456.47
10/22	28	\$697.50
10/29	32	

### *Thank You* To Our Sponsors

- The Mining Journal Sponsor for the month of September was Lillian Swanson “In honor of grandchildren”
- The Mining Journal Sponsor for the month of October was Marilyn Warren in honor of Jim Warren.
- The September 3rd bulletin was given in memory of Elsie ad Hildur Olson, by Jeanne Sandstrom.
- The September 10th bulletin was given in “honor of our anniversary” by Bill & Bobbie Hartman.
- The October 2nd bulletin was given in honor of Jim Warren by Marilyn Warren.
- The October 8<sup>th</sup> bulletin was given in memory Turri and Edith Sandstrom by Jeanne Sandstrom.



### *Remembering in Prayer*

**Members:** Pauline Johnson, Bea & Paul Matthews, Anne, Pastor Bob Sutherland, Sharon Guidebeck, Judy Nease, and Mike Haines.

**Friends:** Emily Ayotte and unborn son, Kathy, Pastor Marcia Solberg, Pat and Tom, Christie Lantz, Trevin Taylor, Holly, Mark, Terri, Sig, Irene, Linda, Dakota, Sally, Rick, Georgianna, Jeremy, Jen Ketola, all who serve in the military, all those impacted by the violent storms and fires and those grieving and healing from the attacks on the innocent.



## **September and October Council Meeting Highlights:**

The dinner for Love INC has been cancelled. No other information is available at this time.

The painting on the outside of the building has been completed. Recommendations to remove cross in front of building due to safety, replacement of the shed in back and some issues with windows that will need to be addressed in the spring.

Concern about low attendance leading to low offering amounts. There is optimism that this will improve with the holiday season approaching.

Habitat for Humanity sent a thank you card and letter thanking our ladies for providing lunch for their workers.

We will be combining three investment funds into one endowment fund, the Franklin Equity Income Fund.

There was a joint council meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> at Emanuel Lutheran Church in Skandia. The call committee conveyed.

We will be updating the member directory for 2018.

There is concern about finding a new pastor, as there are very few graduates coming from seminary. Because of so many openings in the area, it is challenging to fill pulpits at times. We are grateful to Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks and Virginia Paulson and we will be adding Pastor Leon Jarvis to the rotation as well.

There will be no service Christmas Eve morning. We will have evening service at 5pm led by Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks.

There was a conference meeting on October 15<sup>th</sup> in Republic. Pastor Geier attended. There were new elections, but not much else to report.

Pastor Geier followed up with Pauline Johnson, who was in the hospital, Bob Sutherland who is in the Jacobetti Center and also Shannon Lee who is recovering nicely in a nursing home.

Pastor Geier attended and participated in Bishop Katherine Finegan's installation service on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Jean Mitchell was put in charge of selecting a plant and card to represent our church congratulating Bishop Finegan.

Thank you to Al Johnson for doing such a wonderful job on the new kitchen island.

There will be no meeting in November. Next meeting will be December 4<sup>th</sup>.

Amy will be on vacation from December 25-January 8 due to her son having surgery in Ann Arbor.

## Church News!

Our next Council meeting will be held on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

The next Joint Council meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2018.

Bethany's Annual Meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2018

Quilting and prayer shawl continues meeting in the fellowship hall every Wednesday morning.

There will be no morning service on Christmas Eve, however we will be having candlelight and communion service at 5:00 that evening led by Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks.

Deepest sympathies to Rose Herrala and her family on the death of her grandson, James in October.

Dates for Alpha Meetings  
5:30pm-8:30pm  
November 4  
November 12  
November 26  
December 2  
December 9

## Mitten Line

Watch for the Mitten Line hanging in the narthex. We are looking for mittens, gloves, hats and scarves for those in need. Items should be to the church by December 10<sup>th</sup>.

Donations will go to the Salvation Army.

## Thank You For All You Do!

To Pastor Warren Geier, Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendrick and Virginia Paulson for providing worship leadership.

To Al Johnson for the Island storage unit for the church kitchen. Thanks also to Bonnie Johnson for sharing her varnishing skills.

To Keith Polkinghorne for serving as our cantor.

To all the worship helpers.

To all who hauled the LWR quilts to Ishpeming.

To the people who care for the altar.

To all who serve at the coffee hours.

### *Pulpit Supply for November and December*

Nov 5 Mrs. Virginia Paulson

Nov 12 Mrs. Virginia Paulson

Nov 19 Pastor Chrys Levesque  
Hendricks

Nov 26 Pastor Chrys Levesque  
Hendricks

Dec 3 Pastor Leon Jarvis

Dec 10 Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks

Dec 17 Mrs. Virginia Paulson

Dec 24 Christmas Eve 5:00pm

Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks

Dec 31 Pastor Chrys Levesque Hendricks

## All Saints' Sunday

On November 5<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate All Saints' Day. We remember and honor those who have passed away in the last year. This year we remember two long time members:

**Jeanette Thomas**

**November 9, 1927-January 12, 2017**

**Evelyn Goulette**

**March 28, 1925-July 13, 2017.**

May God give rest to these faithful servants.



We always need volunteers for worship helpers and coffee hosts. Sign-ups for these are also available on the bulletin board.



Please keep in mind that we have sign-up sheets on the bulletin board for sponsoring bulletins and Mining Journal Ads. A bulletin sponsorship is \$15 and a Mining Journal Ad is \$25. This is a great way to honor or remember someone special.

## Noisy Offerings

November's Noisy offering will be donated to The Jacobetti Home for Veterans. Located in Marquette, it houses both men and women who have served our country.

Donations go the Activity department.

December's offering will go the food pantry run by the Negaunee Vincent St. de Paul society. Money can be used to purchase food or paper products need by those who cannot afford these items without help.

### **Note:**

**Amy will be out of the office from December 25<sup>th</sup> through January 8<sup>th</sup> due to her son having surgery in Ann Arbor. If there is anything you need in the bulletins before she leaves, please make sure she has them no later than the Monday before Christmas.**



***Deadline for the January/February Newsletter is December 15, 2017***

# In Our Community



Alger-Marquette Community Action is now accepting applications for their **FREE** Head Start programs and in home visiting program. They offer a full day preschool and half day preschool for children ages 3-5, an early head start home visiting program for ages pre-natal to age 3, and a great start readiness program for children age 4. All programs serve children of all abilities, including those with special needs. Please call 228-6522 for more information or to enroll.

## The annual Marquette County Bells for Hospice

event will occur once again Nov. 1, beginning at 11:30 a.m. and concluding at 1 p.m. at the Marquette Commons, 112 S. Third St., in downtown Marquette.

Local churches will ring their bells at noon to honor all who have passed under hospice care, and also to remember the families and friends who still celebrate the life of their loved one.

The volunteers and staff from U.P. Home Health & Hospice and Lake Superior Hospice invite our community to come together and help celebrate the preciousness of life and to remember the lives of those we have loved.

A brief hand-bell ringing event will begin immediately after the church bells at noon, with a reception to follow. If you have been touched by hospice or would like to learn more, we encourage you to attend.

As you may know, Lake Superior Hospice and U.P. Home Health & Hospice are committed to supporting and empowering individuals and their families who are confronting a life-limiting diagnosis. Our goal is to profoundly enhance their quality of life and provide every means of comfort, support and dignity.

Hospice is considered to be the gold standard for quality, compassionate care at the end of life. Hospice services are a team of experts in medical care, pain management, emotional and spiritual support, and volunteers who all tailor their skills to the individual's wishes. Emotional and spiritual support is also extended to the family and friends. Generally, this care is provided in a person's home or in a home-like setting. Hospice is a covered benefit by most insurances.

If you have questions about hospice, contact us at Lake Superior Hospice or U.P. Home Health & Hospice. We regularly surprise families with the level of peace and comfort that can be attained during a very challenging time.

Lindsey Hemmila for Lake Superior Hospice and U.P. Home Health & Hospice



## Winter Snow Fun Holiday Parade & Tree Lighting

**Event Date:** Friday, December 1, 2017  
**Location:** Third Street/Marquette Commons  
**Time:** Parade starts at 6:00 p.m.;  
Tree Lighting to follow.

Celebrate the magic of the holiday season at the **7th Annual 'Winter Snow Fun' Holiday Parade and 42nd Annual City of Marquette Tree Lighting**. Bundle up with friends and family as illuminated floats, tinsel-strewn trucks and colorful carolers transform Third Street into a magical scene from the North Pole. After the parade, spectators are welcomed to the Marquette Commons where Santa Claus and friends will light up Downtown at the annual City of Marquette Tree Lighting. Festivities include a performance by the Marquette Senior High School Redmen Chorale, pony rides, hot chocolate and photos with Santa Claus. The Marquette Post Office staff lends a helping hand to Santa's elves by collecting children's letters to Santa along the Holiday Parade route.

### Route

The parade begins at the corner of North Third Street and Fair Avenue and ends at the Marquette Commons (112 South Third Street). After the parade, spectators are welcomed to the Marquette Commons where Santa Claus and friends will light up Downtown at the 42nd Annual City of Marquette Tree Lighting. Visits with Santa to follow.

### Parade Registration

The Marquette Downtown Development Authority invites you to become a part of the magic by entering a decorated float, vehicle or marching unit with your business, organization or group. In the spirit of giving, there is no fee to participate, equating to free advertising for your business or organization to more than 1,000 spectators of all ages.

The deadline to register is Friday, November 24.



## Local Holiday Bazaars

St. Louis the King Catholic Church Women's Club will be holding their excellent annual bazaar on Sat. Nov. 11th from 9am-2am. Crafts, vendors, lunch, rummage, silent auction & baked goods will be at 264 Silver Creek Rd. in Harvey.

For further information contact Mary Jane Lynch 360-5279.

*Emanuel Lutheran Church in Skandia invites you to their annual Holiday Bazaar and Quilt Sale on Saturday, November 18<sup>th</sup> from 9am-2pm. A homemade soup and sandwich lunch will be available, cardamom bread, jams and jellies, baked goods, handmade crafts including fresh wreaths, many handmade quilts along with a raffle. For more information, please call 906-942-7245. All are welcome!*

# NORTHERN GREAT LAKES SYNOD CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## November 2017

Thursday, November 2, 11:00 a.m.  
Synod Constitution Committee,  
Synod Office, Marquette

Thursday, November 9, 12:00 noon  
World Hunger Committee,  
Synod Office, Marquette

Saturday, November 11, 11:00 a.m.  
Endowment Board,  
Synod Office, Marquette, MI

Sunday, November 12, 4:00 p.m.  
Conference 2 (Copper Country) Mtg.  
Finlandia Chapel, Hancock, MI

Thursday, November 16, 12:30 p.m.  
Finance Committee,  
Synod Office, Marquette, MI

Thursday-Friday, November  
23-24  
Synod Office Closed  
A Blessed Thanksgiving to All!

Tuesday, November 28, 10:30 a.m.  
Worship Committee,  
Bethany Lutheran, Republic, MI

Thursday, November 30, 11:00 a.m.  
Stewardship Committee,  
Synod Office, Marquette, MI

## December 2017

Wednesday, December 6, 11:00  
a.m.

Mission Outreach/Always Being  
Made New Committee, Synod  
Office

Friday, Dec. 22 & Monday, Dec.  
25

Synod Office Closed for Christmas  
**Joy to the World the Lord is  
Come!**



Thank you to all who attended the  
installation service of Bishop  
Katherine Finegan on October  
21<sup>st</sup>. It was a joyous occasion  
shared by many.

# *Worship Team*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Greeter</b>	<b>Lector</b>	<b>Communion Assistant</b>	<b>Coffee Host</b>	<b>Worship Helper</b>
Nov 5	Al & Bonnie Johnson	Kevin Hemmila	Al Johnson	Kevin Hemmila	Kevin Hemmila
Nov. 12	Jean Mitchell	Bonnie Johnson	Dick Salo	Needed	Bill & Bobbie Hartman
Nov. 19	Needed	Gary Wommer	Gary Wommer	Needed	Christal Peterson
Nov. 26	Lillian Swanson	Al Johnson	Keith Polkinghorne	Needed	Bill & Bobbie Hartman
Dec. 3	Al & Bonnie Johnson	Bonnie Johnson	Bonnie Johnson	Needed	Kevin Hemmila
Dec. 10	Jean Mitchell	Al Johnson	Tina Johnson	Needed	Bill & Bobbie Hartman
Dec. 17	Needed	Gary Wommer	Gary Wommer	Needed	Christal Peterson
Dec. 24	Bob & Tina Johnson	Al Johnson	Jeanne Sandstrom & Marilyn Taluga,	Needed	Jean Mitchell
Dec. 31	Lillian Swanson	Patti Polkinghorne	Keith Polkinghorne	Needed	Needed

*Thank You to All Our Volunteers!*

# The Season of Advent

Advent is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Advent typically involves a season of prayer, fasting and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope and joy.

Many Christians celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of time.

Celebrating Advent involves spending time in spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas. In Western Christianity, the season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday prior to Christmas Day, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30, and lasts through Christmas Eve, or December 24.

Many different variations and interpretations of Advent customs exist today, depending on the denomination and the type of service being observed. The following symbols and customs provide a general overview only and do not represent an exhaustive resource for all Christian traditions.

The wreath, typically a circular garland of evergreen branches, is a symbol of eternity and unending love. Five candles are arranged on the wreath, and one is lit each Sunday as a part of the Advent services.

Each of the Advent Candle colors represents a specific element of spiritual readying for the celebration of Christmas.

### **3 Main Advent Candle Colors**

These three principal colors of Advent are packed with rich meaning. Enhance your appreciation of the season as you learn what each color symbolizes and how it is used on the Advent Wreath.

#### **Purple or Blue**

**Purple** (or **violet**) has traditionally been the primary color of Advent, symbolizing repentance and fasting.

Purple is also the color of royalty and the sovereignty of Christ, demonstrating anticipation of and reception of the coming King celebrated during Advent.

Today, many churches have begun to use **blue** instead of purple, as a means of distinguishing Advent from Lent. Others use blue to signify the color of the night sky or the waters of the new creation in Genesis 1.

The first candle of the Advent Wreath, the Prophecy Candle or Candle of Hope, is purple.

The second, called the Bethlehem Candle or the Candle of Preparation, is also purple in color.

Likewise, the fourth Advent Candle color is purple. It's called the Angel Candle or the Candle of Love.

#### **Pink or Rose**

**Pink** (or **rose**) is also one of the colors of Advent used during the third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday in the Catholic Church.

Pink or rose represents joy or rejoicing and reveals a shift in the season away from repentance and toward celebration.

The third Advent Wreath Candle, named the Shepherd Candle or Candle of Joy, is pink in color.

#### **White**

**White** is the color of Advent representing purity and light. Christ is the sinless, spotless, pure Savior. He is the light come into a dark and dying world. Also, those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior are washed of their sins and made whiter than snow.

Lastly, the Christ Candle is the fifth Advent Candle, positioned in the center of the wreath. This Advent Candle's color is white.

Spiritually preparing by focusing on the colors of Advent in the weeks leading up to Christmas is a great way for Christian families to keep Christ the center of Christmas, and for parents to teach their children the true meaning of Christmas.

#### **~ Celebrating Advent**

**Prepare for the Coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas** by Mary Fairchild

# The Season of Christmas

Sometime in November, as things now stand, the "Christmas season" begins. The streets are hung with lights, the stores are decorated with red and green, and you can't turn on the radio without hearing songs about the spirit of the season and the glories of Santa Claus. The excitement builds to a climax on the morning of December 25, and then it stops, abruptly. Christmas is over, the New Year begins, and people go back to their normal lives.

The traditional Christian celebration of Christmas is exactly the opposite. The season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and for nearly a month Christians await the coming of Christ in a spirit of expectation, singing hymns of longing. Then, on December 25, Christmas Day itself ushers in 12 days of celebration, ending only on January 6 with the feast of the Epiphany.

Exhortations to follow this calendar rather than the secular one have become routine at this time of year. But often the focus falls on giving Advent its due, with the 12 days of Christmas relegated to the words of a cryptic traditional carol. Most people are simply too tired after Christmas Day to do much celebrating.

The "real" 12 days of Christmas are important not just as a way of thumbing our noses at secular ideas of the "Christmas season." They are important because they give us a way of reflecting on what the Incarnation means in our lives. Christmas commemorates the most momentous event in human history—the entry of God into the world he made, in the form of a baby.

The Logos through whom the worlds were made took up his dwelling among us in a tabernacle of flesh. One of the prayers for Christmas Day in the Catholic liturgy encapsulates what Christmas means for all believers: "O God, who marvelously created and yet more marvelously restored the dignity of human nature, grant that we may share the divinity of him who humbled himself to share

our humanity." In Christ, our human nature was united to God, and when Christ enters our hearts, he brings us into that union.

The three traditional feasts (dating back to the late fifth century) that follow Christmas reflect different ways in which the mystery of the Incarnation works itself out in the body of Christ.

December 26 is the feast of St. Stephen—a traditional day for giving leftovers to the poor (as described in the carol "Good King Wenceslas").

As one of the first deacons, Stephen was the forerunner of all those who show forth the love of Christ by their generosity to the needy. But more than this, he was the first martyr of the New Covenant, witnessing to Christ by the ultimate gift of his own life. St. John the Evangelist, commemorated on December 27, is traditionally the only one of the twelve disciples who did not die a martyr. Rather, John witnessed to the

Incarnation through his words, turning Greek philosophy on its head with his affirmation, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, KJV).

On December 28, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents, the children murdered by Herod.

These were not martyrs like Stephen, who died heroically in a vision of the glorified Christ. They were not inspired like John to speak the Word of life and understand the mysteries of God. They died unjustly before they had a chance to know or to will—but they died for Christ nonetheless. In them we see the long agony of those who suffer and die through human injustice, never knowing that they have been redeemed. If Christ did not come for them too, then surely Christ came in vain. In celebrating the Holy Innocents, we remember the victims of abortion, of war, of abuse. We renew our faith that the coming of Christ brings hope to the most hopeless. And, in the most radical way possible, we confess that like the murdered children we are saved by the sheer mercy of Christ, not by our own doing or knowing.

In the Middle Ages, these three feasts were each dedicated to a different part of the clergy. Stephen, fittingly, was the patron of deacons. The feast of John the Evangelist was dedicated to the priests, and the feast of the Holy Innocents was dedicated to young men training for the clergy and serving the altar. The subdeacons (one of the "minor orders" that developed in the early church) objected that they had no feast of their own. So it became their custom to celebrate the

"Feast of Fools" around January 1, often in conjunction with the feast of Christ's circumcision on that day (which was also one of the earliest feasts of the Virgin Mary, and is today celebrated as such by Roman Catholics).

The twelve days of Christmas saw similar celebrations of the topsy-turvy and the unruly. A "Lord of Misrule" was often elected at Christmas and ruled the festivities until Epiphany. A schoolboy was traditionally chosen as bishop on December 6 (the Feast of St. Nicholas) and filled all the functions of bishop until Holy Innocents' Day. The Christmas season also sometimes saw the "Feast of the Ass," commemorating the donkey traditionally present at the manger. On this day, people were supposed to bray like a donkey at the points in the Mass where one would normally say "Amen."

It is easy to dismiss all these customs as pagan survivals (which many of them are), or at best as irrelevant and harmless follies. Indeed, the medieval church frowned on most of these practices, and the Reformers of the 16th century finished the job of suppressing them. But perhaps there's a message here worth pondering—that in the words of the horrified pagans of Thessalonica, the message of Christ turns the whole world upside down. In the birth of Jesus, God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

Nothing will ever be safe or normal again. In the words of Michael Card, we are called to "follow God's own fool." And yet, paradoxically, this greatest of revolutionaries was not a rebel. The one who revealed the surprising meaning of God's Law and turned the tables on human traditions nonetheless submitted to be circumcised according to the teaching of Moses.

Finally, on Epiphany (January 6), the celebration of Christmas comes to an end. "Twelfth Night" (as all lovers of Shakespeare know) is the ultimate celebration of Christmas madness (Shakespeare's play features one of his many "wise fools" who understand the real meaning of life better than those who think they are sane). Epiphany commemorates the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel—Christ's manifestation to the nations, as shown in three different events: the visit of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus, and the turning of water into wine. In the Western tradition, the Magi predominate. But in the

Eastern churches, Jesus' baptism tends to be the primary theme.

In the Bucharest subway, children leading lambs walk through the trains in commemoration of the Lamb of God to whom John pointed. Orthodox Christians traditionally have their homes blessed with holy water on or around this day. Nowhere is Epiphany celebrated more joyously than in Ethiopia. Pilgrims from all over the country converge on the ancient city of Aksum, where they bathe in a great reservoir whose waters have been blessed by a priest.

Epiphany is often a forgotten festival (although, by the accident of Edwin's mother's birthday falling on January 5, his very un-liturgical family preserved the ancient tradition of keeping the Christmas decorations up until Epiphany). As the true end-point of the Christmas season, however, Epiphany sends us into the world to live out the Incarnation, to witness to the light of Christ in the darkness. Following Jesus, we have been baptized into his death and resurrection. Whether we are called to martyrdom, or to prophetic witness, or simply to faithful living in the joys and sorrows of our daily lives, we live all of our days in the knowledge of our dignity, redeemed through Christ and united to God.

We are part of the strange society of people whose world has been turned upside down, and we go out to witness to this topsy-turvy truth: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: and we beheld his glory ... and of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:14, 16).

~ The Real 12 Days of Christmas  
Celebrating Christ's birth with saints of the faith during the actual Christmas season.  
Edwin and Jennifer Woodruff Tait





