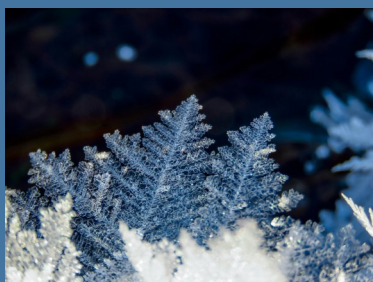


The Shepherd's Voice

January/February 2025



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Happy
New Year,
2025!

PASTOR'S NOTE:

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord!

But Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

Matthew 19:26

[Jesus said], "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."

Luke 22:42

[Paul said], "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

As we are still in the Christmas season, I continue to wish you a Merry Christmas! It was wonderful to see so many of you at our Christmas Eve worship services this year. What a meaningful time of worship and celebration and it was good to share it with you!

As we look ahead in the next few weeks, a couple of key dates for you to pay attention to are:

Jan 19th
Jan 26th

Annual Congregational Meeting
Commitment Sunday



Good Shepherd
Lutheran Church

(Continued on page 2)

I also want to wish you blessings on this new calendar year. It is hard to believe that 2024 is gone and we are now beginning 2025.

For many, if not most of us, being at the start of something invites us to be filled with anticipation, expectation, and hope. A new calendar year often does exactly that, and so we have New Year resolutions. It is a time when we may reflect on the past and make some intentional choices about how we plan to do things differently going forward based on our expectations and hope. That is where our resolutions come in. We set goals. We come up with things such as a personal mission statement, or a mantra, or a centering word, for the new year.

That all sounds great, except most of us know the success rate when it comes to New Year resolutions. Most of us are aware of how crowded the parking lots are at the fitness centers and at the Sports Pavilion at Rock Chalk Park. For the first 2 or 3 weeks of January, that is. After that, many people have given up on their resolutions and have gone back to their old ways. Most of us have been there and can totally relate to this pattern.

There is nothing wrong with the anticipation, expectation, and hope that comes from fresh starts and new beginnings. In fact, we could argue that we were created that way. But we also know that time and time again, it has been proven that our will, our willpower, is not enough to make these kinds of changes happen, and to then reach our goals, in spite of what we tell ourselves and how hard we try. At the very least, it makes us tired and weary. This is where it is good to reflect on the verse from Matthew 19:26, what for us is impossible, is completely possible for God.

Which brings us back to a question that was asked of each one of us at our Christmas Eve worship services. There is nothing wrong with taking time to reflect on the past, and then being filled with anticipation, expectation, and hope about choosing intentional ways of living differently going forward. In fact, it is a sign of maturity and wisdom. And it is important for us to notice that God has given us a variety of times and events that invite us to see new beginnings.

We just celebrated one, the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ. There are many others throughout God's story, including Jesus' death and resurrection.

So, in our weariness, and in the midst of this weary world, in our need to rejoice, on Christmas Eve we saw that even though this world said there was no room for Jesus - God made room and Jesus was born and given to us. The world said there was no room at the inn, and God made room in a stable. Knowing that through Jesus, God made room for us, on Christmas Eve, the question was asked of each of us, "Will you make room in your life for Jesus?"

If you say Yes, or want to say Yes, you may be thinking of all the things you would have to do, or of what you might have to remove or get rid of, to make room. Maybe you have tried before, and it did not stick. After all, we know the success rate of resolutions. We know that our willpower is not enough. You may wonder now, what will make this any different.

(Continued on page 3)

To the question of, will you make room in your life for Jesus, you will need to put Jesus in the center of your life. When we do that, it is no longer about our resolutions and goals, but it is about Christ's desire for us. It is true, our will power is not enough for this kind of change, but when Christ is the center of your life, it is no longer about our will, our will power, it is about His will, His power. As the verse from Luke 22:42 reminds us, Jesus himself points us to God's will in all parts of our lives.

If you need a mission statement, or mantra, or centering word, Jesus has provided it. Take him at his word, his invitation, when he says, "Follow me." As we have shared before, another way to keep Christ at the center is to simply choose our next action based on will this please the heart of Jesus? Will this make Jesus smile?

Yes, it is good to reflect on the past and make intentional choices about how we will live differently going forward. For us as Christians, that includes things like prayer, reading scripture, attending worship, serving others - but all of this is truly doable when you make room in your life for Jesus, and you put him at the center.

And if you are concerned about the poor success of most resolutions that are kicked off at the start of something, at a time of new beginning, such as a new calendar year – there is Good News for you.

With Christ at the center of your life, it is at his birth, at his death on the cross, and at his resurrection and the empty tomb, and in our baptism, you are continually given a fresh start, a new beginning. New life is yours in Jesus Christ - today and every day in 2025, and beyond. It is when Christ is at the center of your life, that we can understand what Paul spoke of in the verse from Philippians 4:13, when we are following him, when we are doing his will, then we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Again, blessings to you on this new calendar year! Together may we not just make room in our life for Jesus, but may he be the center of our life.

Grace and peace to you,

Pastor Ted

JUSTICE MATTERS

Research Committees met on December 8th.

The *Ending Chronic Homelessness* Committee decided to go into the monitoring phase. We will watch the "A Place for Everyone" plan closely. The Elder Care Workforce Committee decided if there are 24 students enrolled in Dwyer's program in January 2025 and members find in February the issue cut has been achieved, then this committee will go into monitoring.

A Youth Trauma Research Committee has been formed. This will be the first year for our new issue and **it is not too late for any Network Member to join this committee**. Just inform Judy Pope that you are interested

Music and Worship

THANK YOU...

- ...to the musicians who shared their talents during Advent, Christmas Eve and Lessons and Carols services.
- ...to all those who helped with the “greening” on December 22nd. Many hands helped transform our sanctuary and narthex into a festive Christmas worship and gathering space.
- ...to all who provided poinsettia plants for our festive sanctuary Christmas décor.
- ...to Jerry & Judy Pope for providing our Christmas tree.



CELEBRATING THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

On Sunday, January 12th we will celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord. At this time we will take the opportunity to remember our own baptisms.

ALSO COMING UP...

Annual Congregational Meeting – January 19th – **ONE service only at 10:00 am** followed by our congregational meeting.

Commitment Card Sunday – January 26th – please bring your 2025 commitment and Time & Talent cards.

Ash Wednesday – March 5th – 7:00 pm. This service marks the beginning of Lent, with the imposition of ashes and Holy Communion.

Lenten Midweek Services – Please join us on Wednesdays, March 12 – April 9 for a light supper and midweek worship service.

6:00 pm Soup supper, Fellowship Hall
7:00 pm Lenten Midweek Worship

Returning Palm Branches

As the season of Lent approaches, we gather the palm “branches” the congregation took home on Palm Sunday last year. These dried palm leaflets will be burned to make the ashes for our **Ash Wednesday service at 7:00 PM, March 5, 2025.**

Traditionally, these branches are gathered on the Sunday before Lent begins, also known as, “Transfiguration Sunday.” This year, we will extend the gathering time a couple of weeks, to give everyone a chance to return their palm branches.

Please return your palm branches to the basket on the table outside the sanctuary doors between February 23 and March 2, 2025.

Upcoming Music & Worship Calendar including Ash Wednesday and Lenten Midweek Worship

Sunday, Jan. 12
Sunday Mar. 2
Wednesday, Mar. 5

Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, 9:00 am and 11:00 am
Transfiguration Sunday—bring palms to worship
Ash Wednesday 7:00 pm

Wednesdays March 12
through April 9

Light supper, 6:00 pm, followed by Lenten Midweek
Worship at 7:00 pm.

Kelley Witmer, Worship Committee Chair, kelley@wheatfieldtechnology.com, 785-760-0155
Elena Cressy, Music Minister – Classic Worship, elena.cressy@gmail.com, 651-354-5520
Megan Ebke, Worship Leader – Worship 2.0, megan.ebke@gmail.com, 785-844-1830
Thad Reist, Organist/Pianist—Classic Worship, tjreist@yahoo.com, 785-556-0333

Hospitality Committee

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

During the season of Lent, we gather for a simple meal and fellowship on Wednesday evenings before the midweek Lenten worship services at 6 pm. Watch for a signup sheet in the narthex in February for the opportunity to help on one or more Wednesdays by providing soup or bread or to help with set up.



What's a soup spoon's favorite sport?

Bowling.

What do the police do if you steal soup?

They arrestew.

I bought a warehouse full of soup stock.

Now I'm a bouillonaire.

How do you make gold soup?

Put in 14 carrots.



Quilt Blessing

Seven beautiful quilts made by the Good Shepherd Quilting group prior to the Covid pandemic were recently blessed during worship. The quilts have been taken to The Willow Domestic Violence Center where they will be given to victims of domestic violence. We give thanks for the ministry of those who made the quilts and ask God's blessing on those who will receive them.

The quilting group has not been active since 2020, but there has been interest expressed in forming a new group. Please contact Kirsten in the church office if you would be interested in exploring the possibility of a new GSLC quilting ministry.





Save the date for the 2nd annual GSLC Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras pancake dinner and silent auction fundraiser to be held Tuesday, March 4.

Pancake dinner tickets may be purchased in advance or at the door:
\$8 adults; \$5 for children ages 3 to 12

Silent auction items are needed: Consider asking your favorite local business or employer to donate an item; if you have a skill or talent, consider donating a handmade item or your time. Contact Kim Mosher (ktmos@yahoo.com) or Jill Whetter (jillpr@gmail.com) with your silent auction item idea.



Green Pastures Preschool

Hello from the preschool!

The preschool has been busy pouring into the lives of our students and families this fall. As we look forward to Christmas we are feeling very blessed in our little school community. The students' joy as they grow and learn is wonderful to see and reminds me we are doing very important work.

We enjoyed our first ever Halloween Party off the premises at Cedarhurst Living, a retirement community. The kids looked adorable in their costumes and had a great time while bringing smiles to many of their residents. It was definitely a success! Our field trip to the pumpkin patch was a beautiful day enjoyed by all. We also had our Fall Feast right before Thanksgiving, the kids had a wonderful time and the parents seemed to as well.

Right now we are in full prep mode for our Christmas Pageant. The children will be acting out the Nativity play and singing some songs too. We will have a milk and cookies reception right after the show.

As I reflect on the last few months, what stands out the most to me is the impact I feel like our little preschool is having. We had a student join us from Korea for these first few months of school before having to return. As his mom was saying goodbye to us all she teared up and just thanked us repeatedly for such a wonderful experience for her son. We also have a family who is going through a traumatic medical issue and the student needed to take a few months off. Because we are so small, and not just a business, we were able to hold this child's spot in preschool and the relief from his mother was palpable. I truly believe in the impact a loving school can have on not only a child but a whole family. I am so thankful that Green Pastures can continue to provide this despite the world seeming more and more chaotic around us.

Thank you to the members of Good Shepherd Lutheran for continuing to support us!