

The Zion Flame

January 2022



Zion Lutheran Church
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Pastor Becky Langholz

Dear ones in Christ,

May the peace and joy of Christ be with you all in this New Year 2022. Often-times, our church calendar is out of sync with secular life. As people of faith, we become skilled at navigating parallel cultures, and we have many spiritual gifts to draw from. Traditionally, the season of Christmas does not end until January 6th, the feast of the Epiphany. “Epiphany” means “revelation”, an “ah-ha” moment of clarity, like the bright star that guided seekers to Jesus. January 6th is the formal celebration of the arrival of the three magi to worship young Jesus and to give him precious gifts. This visit most likely did not happen on the night of Jesus’ birth but some months or perhaps even a year or two later. In some other cultures, January 6th is the day for gift-giving and an important bookend to the Christmas season. But in our culture, when Christmas trees and decorations start to go up the day after Thanksgiving, by the time the New Year rolls around, we are ready to clean up the pine needles and ornaments and start fresh. We might make it through six days of Christmas celebrations but rarely twelve.

For most, January 1st is about New Year’s, and New Year’s is all about will power. We hear secular messages this time of year about resolutions and finally getting it right. I have nothing against hard work and self-improvement. Might we all be inspired to care for the gifts of our bodies, our relationships and our skills, as God has blessed us. But a call to “more will power” seems out of sync this year. It makes me tired just thinking about it. The pandemic wears on and accelerates with the omicron variant. We face extreme weather, political in-fighting and societal ills. 2022 might be a hard year to muster up the will power to fix it all, but we can certainly face it all and find God in it all through the clear eyes of faith.

The spiritual gifts of Christmas and Epiphany will serve us well in these first days, weeks and months of 2022. The soft glow of baby Jesus’ love and peace can warm our hearts, even in troubled times. The bright light of the Epiphany star can continue to light up our cold, dark winter evenings. The promise and hope of God’s unending love can keep us steady and help us to endure all that these coming months might bring.

Recently, one of our church members shared how she keeps a “tree of light and hope” up in her home during the months of January and February. An “Epiphany tree” I might also call it. It is a cheerful, homemade creation that helps to carry joy into these months when we continue to need something to look forward to. Perhaps you will be inspired to put one up in your home this year or especially in your heart.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding be with us all,

Pr. Becky Langholz

Pr. Becky is regularly in the office on Monday and Thursday mornings from 9am-12pm.
She can also be reached by cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or by email: pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org

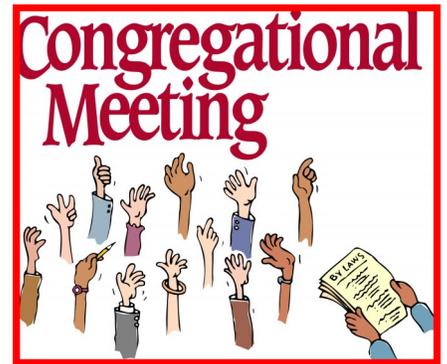


Pr. Becky is in the church office Mondays & Thursdays from 9am-12pm. She is also working from home and can be reached on her cell phone: (360) 393-6630 or via email at pastor@zionlutheranwhatcom.org Fridays are her day off; only emergency or prayer chain calls/texts on Fridays, please.

We will publish a new church directory in January. If you have any updates to the current directory, please let Pr. Becky know before January 9th.

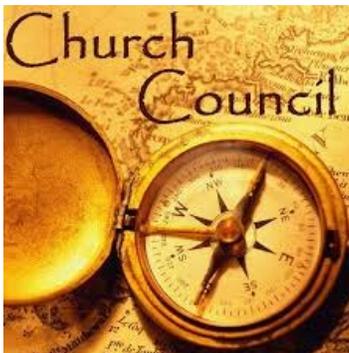
Did you know you can now give to our church online? You can even set up automatic withdrawals or give to specific special funds. Check out our church website: www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org and the "Give" tab for more information.

Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on January 23, 2022 after 10am worship. Save the date and plan to participate that Sunday. Our congregation's Annual Report for 2021 will be published on January 9th. Please take some time to review the report and the included Congregational meeting agenda before the meeting. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Pr. Becky or President Norman Meyers.



Pr. Becky will be away on vacation Sunday, January 16th. Pr. Marjorie Lorant will preach and preside while she is away. If there is a pastoral emergency, please contact Pr. Jana Schofield at (360) 384-1422.

The Church Council will meet on Weds., January 12th at 4:30pm. Reports or agenda items are due by Weds., January 5th. Continue to hold our leaders in prayer and thank them for their time and effort.



Financial Information (through November 2021):

General Fund Balance: \$29,670.09
 Special Fund Balance: \$5,395.84
 Thrivent Mutual Fund Balance: \$22,816.77
 For the year 2021:
 Receipts: \$84,020.96
 Expenses: \$74,070.75
 Net: \$9,950.21

As the COVID landscape keeps shifting, we ask folks to please abide by State and County guidelines for masking, distancing and other safety protocols while at church events.

What's going on with that orange chain blocking the church parking lot? Sadly, our church parking lot is often home to loitering and other activity during the wee hours of the night. To discourage vandalism and to ensure a peaceful living environment for our parsonage family, we have installed the chain and pilons. During the week, please drive around the utility pole in front of the parsonage. We are in contact with the Sheriff's department and the Church Council is monitoring the situation.



From the Bishop

January 2022

During this winter, as many continue to grapple with - and be discouraged by - the continuation of the pandemic, isolation, discontent, and loneliness, we might feel that our relationships are not as strong as they once were – with family and friends, with colleagues and co-workers, and with those in our church.

Recently I read a book called *Tempered Resilience* by Tod Bolsinger. While I wasn't enthralled with the whole book, I did resonate with one visual that he used and perhaps you will find helpful in this time, too. He writes about how our different relationships help us in our resilience and in our on-going ability to adapt. On page 112 Bolsinger writes, "To flourish in ministry or other forms of social leadership, leaders need to be conscious of at least three different contexts, and the relationships needed to flourish in those contexts, 'front stage, backstage, and offstage.'"

The Front Stage is the public face that we show to the world. It is the place where "performance" happens. It is critical to have trustworthy colleagues or teammates where you are able to be yourself. These relationships could include peers and teammates, partners, and colleagues. An example from scripture would be the disciples. Who would you include in your life?



The Back Stage is the place to support and nurture you in your "front stage" work. Good front stage work depends on lots of time backstage analyzing and thinking about the work that is being done, learning from the lessons of success and failure from others, and especially, gaining perspective from experienced leaders. In his book Bolsinger cautions, "Backstage relationships don't happen because of others. They happen because of you." (p. 116) In other words, you might have to seek out "backstage people. Backstage relationships include therapists, coaches, mentors, spiritual directors, pastors, and more. An example in scripture would be David listening to Samuel or Moses listening to his father-in-law Jethro or Ruth listening to Naomi. Who would you include in your life?

The Off Stage are the people that you are emotionally closest to and who are your confidants. As Bolsinger writes, "The quality of your relationships with other people influences how emotionally resilient you can be in the face of an emotional or physical crisis. In general, the more quality social support you can draw upon from family and friends, the more flexible and resilient you can be in stressful situations." (p. 120) An example in scripture would be Elizabeth and Mary. Who would you include in your life?

So, I'm wondering, how are doing in these three areas? Are your relationships strong "front stage, backstage, and off-stage"? Do you have good connections? Where could you form deeper connections? Where do you need help in forming new relationships?

I'd love to hear from you how we can be a more connected church community, how we can support one another, and how resilience can be built up by forming and growing relationships.

I know this is a difficult and frustrating time for many. I feel it, too. May you feel connected with one another. May you feel upheld by one another. And, especially, in this Epiphany season, may God's presence, love and grace be made known to you.

+ Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee

bishop@lutheransnw.org



Your prayers make a difference! If you have a person or situation that needs prayer, please call Pr. Becky and let her know. She can alert Zion's prayer chain and/or add the item to our congregational list.



Our prayers as a congregation continue:

- ◆ For all experiencing sickness, difficulty or grief, especially Bethany, Mark, Nina, Donna, Julie, Carol, Jim, Rowan, Amy and her family.
- ◆ For all experiencing cancer especially Tammy, Brayden, Maye and Kinsley.
- ◆ For these ministries: Lutino Adunu in Gulu, Uganda, Sol de Justicia church in Grecia, Costa Rica, Hogar Irekani in Michoacán, México, African S.M.I.L.E in Tanzania, Family Promise of Whatcom County and World Relief of Whatcom County.
- ◆ For health, strength and endurance for all as the pandemic continues.
- ◆ For all affected by recent storms and flooding. May God grant us strength and peace.



January Birthdays

- ★ 7 Sharon Bradford, Diane Cordrey
- ★ 10 Ryan Lockwood
- ★ 14 Levi Swanger
- ★ 18 Amy Ping
- ★ 22 Carol McCormick, Aimee Day
- ★ 31 Elisha Ping



Paloma Jose Day celebrates a belated quinceañera in Oaxaca City in December with her family.





January Outreach and Missions

Zion's on-going collections:

- Non-perishable food items
- Household items and toiletries
- Bottled water



We partner with local non-profits to get these items to community members in need. Thank you for your generous contributions!



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Whatcom Community Foundation has established a "Resilience Fund" to help victims of the November floods in our county. You can give directly to the effort online: www.whatcomcf.org or you can make a check out to the church with "Resilience Fund" in the memo line, and we will pass it along. We are also mindful of those in Kentucky and other states who recently suffered devastating hurricanes. You can give to this relief effort through Lutheran Disaster Response directly online: <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response/> or by writing a check to the church with "Kentucky Relief" in the memo line.





Zion Lutheran Church Mission Statement

Since 1903

The beloved, forgiven people of God.

Called to spread the Good News so as to build up the body of Christ.

Gifted to share the healing love of Jesus Christ with our hurting world.

Empowered by the Spirit to be a caring country congregation for ministry to one another and the larger community.



Zion’s Relational Covenant

In our life together, we will...

Give thanks to God for the gift of our church and each other. Honor and respect our diverse opinions, perspectives and work-styles. Take responsibility for our own feelings and deal with issues directly. Ask clarifying questions and avoid making assumptions. Speak up honestly in the proper time and place. Make decisions in a transparent manner. Support decisions made by the group. Pray for unity in our congregation.

MEETINGS AND EDUCATION

As the COVID landscape keeps shifting, we ask folks to please abide by State and County guidelines for masking and other safety protocols while at church events.

As the first Saturday of the month is New Year’s Day, we’ll gather to clean the church on January 8th this month. We meet at 9am. Cleaning and maintaining our church are volunteer efforts, and many hands make light work. Come on out for an hour of vacuuming, dusting and generally sprucing up our beloved church building. Many thanks.

The Monday Bible Study will pick back up on January 10th from 12-12:30pm as we begin a new year together. Bring your Bible and a desire to explore God’s word with others! We will not meet on Monday, January 17th in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The Evangelism Committee will meet January 10th at 2:15pm at Woods Coffee in Ferndale. Your ideas and helping hands are welcome. Speak to Rosemary Meyers or Pr. Becky for more information.



Inclement weather is upon us. If we need to cancel a worship service or church event, you will be notified by email (we will also call those who do not have email). You can also check our website www.zionlutheranwhatcom.org or local radio KGMI AM 790 for closure listings.



Thank you to all who worked hard to make Advent and Christmas so special this year. We enjoyed a lovely season together. Planning, decorating and special music all take extra time and effort. We give thanks to God for opportunities to share our gifts with others and to give glory to God in all that we do. Thank you!

Connect with Zion online: Resources for worship and reflection are available on our church [YouTube channel](#). We also live-stream the worship service there each Sunday at 10am. You can also find the church on Facebook.

Facts about the Season of Epiphany

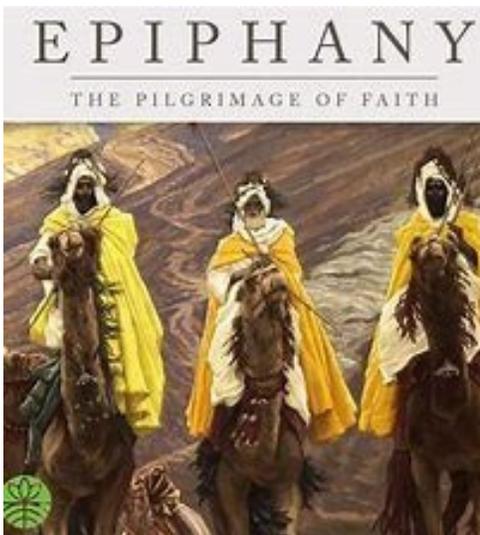
Epiphany occurs in the Christian calendar on January 6. It signifies the event of the **Magi**, or [Wise Men](#), visiting the baby Jesus, and is known in some Latin cultures as **Three Kings Day**.

In the Eastern (Orthodox and Oriental) churches, it is known as the **Feast of Theophany** (God Manifest), commemorating Jesus' baptism with the attendant appearance of the Holy Spirit as a dove and the voice of God the Father. This story is recounted in all four Gospels of the New Testament. This date is also tied to Jesus' miracle of changing the water to wine at the Wedding at Cana in the Gospel of John, Chapter 2.



Christmas vs. Advent

So, the [12 Days of Christmas](#) don't end at Christmas; Advent does. Instead, the 12 days *start* with Christmas and end with Epiphany. These 12 days are sometimes called **Christmastide**. The subsequent "season" of Epiphany lasts from January 6 through the day before [Lent](#). Some Latin American and European cultures extend this season to February 2 or [Candlemas](#).



Epiphany In the East

Epiphany is a Greek word that means *manifestation, appearance, revelation, or showing forth*. Historically, Epiphany began in the Eastern Church as the celebration of the nativity of Jesus Christ during the 1st century.



From the VEEP

January 2022

Hope. I ended last month's article by wishing that you all would begin to hope, despite the obstacles and roadblocks that can divert us down a path of despair. At our December Synod Vice Presidents meeting, we were asked what we hoped for in the coming year. In addition to hoping for more kindness in the world, many of us expressed hope that we would be able to gather in person more this year. This hope was also reflected when the Synod Council met in November to consider what form our 2022 Synod Assembly might take. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the new COVID variant, the planning team had recommended another virtual assembly, but the council overwhelmingly voted to attempt an in-person assembly instead. Given this new task, the team has set about figuring out the logistics of such a gathering. Although still in the early stages of planning, we do have some information we can share with you:

Theme: Abounding Hope

Date: Saturday, June 4, 2022

Location: To be determined, but we are exploring congregational settings that are large enough to house the hundreds of assembly participants with appropriate physical distancing.

COVID Safety Protocols and Restrictions (please take these into consideration when you are electing voting members):

All attendees will have to show proof of full COVID vaccination, as defined by the CDC at the time of the assembly.

Masks will be required for all participants while indoors.

All relevant local, state, and federal safety guidelines and mandates in place at the time of the assembly will be followed.

The main business of this year's assembly will be approving two budgets (we will not be having an assembly in 2023, but rather synod-wide programmatic gatherings) and electing members of Synod Council. Two officer positions are also up for election: Vice President and Secretary. The vice president must be a layperson. The secretary may be a layperson or a rostered minister. Nominations for those positions will be open in the spring. If you are interested in a position on council or are discerning whether you are called to serve as an officer of the synod, don't hesitate to reach out to me to learn more about those roles. Be alert to information coming from the synod office in the weeks ahead, as we firm up our planning. You will find updated information on our synod website: www.lutheransnw.org/synod-assembly. As we go forward through Epiphany and back into ordinary time, "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

- ◆ Here are a few things I or the Synod Council have been up to:
- ◆ Executive Committee met on December 9. Among other actions, we approved the Synod Assembly voting member allotment and chose the theme: Abounding Hope
- ◆ Synod Vice Presidents met via Zoom on December 11 for our regular monthly gathering. The main topic was ecumenical partnerships and full communion agreements.
- ◆ The Synod Finance Committee has been meeting regularly and working on the proposed budgets for our upcoming fiscal years.

Kay Edgerton, Vice President

NW Washington Synod/ELCA

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