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Epiphany and House Blessings

- Pastor Sorenson

Christmas day begins the 12 days of Christmas. During this season, we celebrate the fact that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We celebrate that our God took on human flesh so that He could be our peace through His suffering, death, and resurrection.

The 12th and final day of Christmas is always on January 5th. With the season of Christmas drawing to a close, we enter next into the season of Epiphany. Every year we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord on January 6th (this year we do so with a joint Divine Service at St. Paul's Jonesville along with the saints of St. John's, White Creek).

On Epiphany, you hear many different things. There are, of course, the wise men or Magi. There are the gifts they come to bring: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. There's the star that guides them to the Christ Child. There's the worship that they offer to this newborn Prince of peace.

But there's one detail of the Epiphany that is of interest for a different reason. St. Matthew writes, "And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him" (Matthew 2:11).

The wise men visit Jesus in a house. It's a small detail, but it shows us something important about our Lord's incarnation. He has come to dwell with us. He has come to live with us, even abiding in a house. The blessing of His incarnation is not just that He was on the earth, but that He is with us in all things, even in our houses.

From this, a custom emerged to have the houses of God's people blessed on or during Epiphany. This house blessing rite is a time for the Word of God to enter into the home and sanctify it. It's a time to hear again the promises of the Lord in your home, where you live, sleep, and eat. It's a time to be reminded that the Lord dwells with us by His grace and mercy.

Many times we do such a blessing when we have something new. We did one in 2019, for instance, for the new parsonage. But the season of Epiphany reminds us that this blessing is good to have whenever we would like. A yearly house blessing during this season can be a great reminder of God's promises to us and a great comfort in knowing that the Lord has blessed our dwellings.

To that end, if you would like to have a house blessing done during the season of Epiphany, or any time, please let me know. The rite can be as extensive or as brief as you would like. We can go room by room or just do a more general blessing. By no means is this a command or a law that you must have this done, but rather this is an invitation and encouragement to make use of this special rite as you see fit.

Because, after all, we know that the Word of God is powerful and true. We know that it brings great blessings to us and to all that it touches. A blessing of your home is just another way that our Lord desires to dwell with us with His unending grace and mercy. May the Lord continue to bless us and all our dwellings until at last we dwell with Him in the new heavens and the new earth.

Stewardship Under the Cross

Why should I Tithe? A Bible Study on Money Offerings

We do not make God poor when we fail to give money to Him properly, but we do make ourselves poor if we do not give according to the standards He sets for us in His Word, the Bible. God does not need our money, but we need to give the way the Bible tells us to in order to overcome the negative influence money and the things of this world can have on us. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” Matthew 6:24

Some of the teachings of the Bible are more difficult than others. For many the teachings about money, possessions and offerings are among the most difficult. But God’s instructions are for our good, not for our harm. If we follow His instructions, we will be free and content. Jesus said in John 8:36 “If the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.” We also read in 1 Timothy 6:6 that “...godliness with contentment is great wealth.” That is God’s desire for His people: freedom, godliness, and contentment. That is also the desire of this church for its members and associates. That is why this Bible study is presented to you. Please pray for the Lord to make you open to His message, then go through the study. If you live in a family setting, it would probably be good to do the study together.

1. To whom does my money belong? ‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,’ says the Lord Almighty. Haggai 2:8 King David said to God, “But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you have already given us!” 1 Chr. 29:14 So everything I have really belongs to God. I am merely His manager of those things.

2. What 5 requirements does God make on every Christian regarding money offerings?

a. 2 Corinthians 9:7 “You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully.” So the Lord wants me to make my money offerings willingly.

b. Proverbs 3:9-10 “Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine.” The Lord wants me to make my money offerings to Him first. He is not pleased when I give Him leftovers.

c. 1 Corinthians 16:2 “On the first day of every week, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.” This tells me that the Lord wants me to make my money offerings to Him regularly, that is, whenever I have income, whether I am able to go to church that week or not.

d. 1 Corinthians 16:2 “On every Lord’s Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.” Deut. 16:17 “Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.” Luke 12:48 “Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given.” The Lord tells me that it is not the amount itself that is important. What is important is that I make my money offerings proportionately. In other words, I should give a generous percentage of the income the Lord enables me to earn through my work and investments.

e. 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 “Now I want to tell you, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in Jerusalem.” Luke 7:47 Jesus said, “I tell you, her sins—and they are many— have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” So my money offerings to the Lord should also be made generously. Here’s the list of Biblical principles when it comes to making money offerings: 1. Willingly 2. First 3. Regularly (whenever I have income) 4. Proportionately (percentage) 5. Generously (Faithful Christian giving starts at a tithe)

3. What if I serve the Lord faithfully, even exceptionally, in other areas? Does that mean I don’t need to follow these directions about money offerings? 2 Corinthians 8:7 “Since you excel in so many ways—you have so much faith, such gifted speakers, such knowledge, such enthusiasm, and such love for us—now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving.” Matthew 23:23 Jesus once compared offerings with “the important things of the law—justice, mercy, and faith.” And he said, “You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things.” So no

matter how well or faithfully I may serve in some areas, the Lord expects me to follow His directions regarding money offerings, also, and even to excel in this area.

4. What exactly is “tithing” and what does God say about it.? “To tithe” literally means “to give 10%.” The command about tithing was part of the Old Testament laws for the nation of Israel. So what God said in the Law is no longer a requirement, although the principle remains. (The principle in the Bible is that offerings begin at 10%.) But the Lord’s promises never change. And consider this promise about tithing: Mal. 3:10-11 “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not shrivel before they are ripe,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

5. Is it true that some people have tried tithing and it didn’t work for them? If that’s true, then God’s Word is not true. We should remember that the Bible does not say that tithing can be done without sacrifice. But God does say that the blessings will far outweigh any hardship if the tithing is done consistently and from the heart.

6. Is getting a blessing from God my motivation for tithing? No, the motivation is His amazing love for me. Consider these three Scriptures: Galatians 2:20 “I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” 2 Corinthians 8:9 “You know how full of love and kindness our Lord Jesus Christ was. Though he was very rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.” 2 Corinthians 5:15 “He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.”

7. Please prayerfully consider the following statements. If you live in a family setting, please talk and pray about them together.

The Lord has blessed us with all we need for this body and life.

Have we been making first-fruit, regular, proportionate and generous (at least 10%, a tithe) money offerings to the Lord from the heart?

If so, what other needs in our church and community can use our attention?

If not – what steps can we take to move in a faithful direction?

- Rev. Heath Curtis (coordinator, LCMS Stewardship ministry), *Stewardship Under the Cross*, pg. 40-44

Elders’ Corner

(A monthly feature from the Board of Elders)

“We forgive because we’ve been forgiven.” (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13)

As a Christian (especially as Lutherans), we might question what it means to do good works as the outflow of our faith, and the relationship those works have to our own salvation.

The world twists the idea of Christian charity (or love) to mean that we should devote our entire being to selfless care of others, and if we don’t, we’re hypocrites!

Our daily circumstances seem to keep us from seeing how we could possibly accomplish such a life: we’re already overwhelmed by life’s demands. But when we focus on the reality of what Christ has done for us – knowing we are already saved – we put ourselves in our proper position; the poor miserable sinner and the loved and cherished child of God!

Our reality should be remembering what Jesus has done for us. Our actions should only reflect what salvation means to us and how much His actions mean to us (hopefully everything!)

We are blessed with the reminders of our salvation every time we hear God’s forgiving words and when we receive His body and blood.

Anything we do becomes a statement to the world of what Jesus means to us. We forgive because we are forgiven!

Thank you, Jesus!

In the love of our Savior,
Elders of St Peter

Elder & Auditing Committee Position: In our January quarterly voters' meeting, we will elect one man for the position of elder and one person for the auditing committee. If you would like to volunteer for either of these positions, please speak to a council member.

Quarterly Voters' Meeting: Will be immediately after church on Sunday, January 12th.

Usher, Acolyte, Communion Training: We will meet together soon to brush up on usher duties, acolyting, and communion assistance. Come on out to learn more about each of these unique ways to serve in the church. You won't be obligated to serve if you attend, so if you've ever had interest in learning more about these roles this is the perfect opportunity. Keep an eye on the bulletins and Facebook page for more information on date and time.

Altar Flowers: If you would like to sponsor altar flowers, there is a sign-up sheet for 2025 in the hallway between Pastor's study and the church office. The cost to sponsor the flowers is \$20, and the payment can be put in the offering plate or in the mail rack outside the church office door. The flowers are yours for the taking after the worship service. Please contact Sue Anne Heilers at (812) 717-0167 if you have any questions.

Communion Assistance: We are looking for people who may be interested in setting up and/or cleaning up communion. No need to worry about the linens, as those will be taken care of for you. If you are interested in learning more, please speak with Lynnette or Pastor. The sign-up sheet for 2025 is also on the bulletin board.



Vanco: A new, online offering method is now available. You can find more information by scanning the QR code in the bulletin or by going to <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZMRA>.

Church & Parish Hall Cleaning Volunteers: If you are interested in helping to clean the Church and Parish Hall, there is a sign-up sheet in the hallway in the Parish Hall. You can sign-up for a month at a time and you can sign-up with another person/couple/family too. Prayerfully consider lending a hand in this way. You may also speak to Janice Acree or Jenni Acton for more information about the cleaning duties or the sheet on the bulletin board.

Puzzle Sharing: If you would like to borrow a puzzle or donate a puzzle, they can be found or placed in the cabinet in the Conference Room closest to the white board. Enjoy a variety of puzzles and some fellowship with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!

Kenya Mission: I am getting ready for my upcoming mission trip to help the children at the Point of Grace Academy in Kenya. I will be bringing an extra suitcase with me to leave there for the children. If you would be able to help me fill it, that would be wonderful! Here are some of the items the children need: Lotion, deodorant, flip flops, women's camisole, boys underwear (boxers) all sizes, girls underwear (must be new in packaging) sizes 6-12, wash cloths, backpacks, sports bra, toothbrushes/toothpaste, hair bands, stocking caps, and jackets. Thank you to those who have already donated to my trip. I am trying to raise money for a 45' parachute, jump ropes, and soccer balls as I am going to be in charge of children's activities while we are there. Thank you once again for your prayers, love, and support. I have a suitcase in the parish hall to collect items in. I need these by early January. Thank you! – Kathy Rebber

YOUTH GROUP & YOUTH CLASSES

Youth Group: The youth group will meet Sunday, January 19th, at 5 PM for our youth night. We will have a meal, time to study God's Word, and a fun activity. Feel free to bring a friend! If you would like to be added to the text group to receive youth group notifications, please let Pastor know.

Gingerbread Houses: The congregation is invited to check out the different gingerbread house displays the youth group made last month. They are on display in the Parish Hall. There will also be a basket next to them for you to vote for your favorite one.



EVENTS

Game Night: Game Night will be on Friday, February 7th, beginning at 6:00 PM. All ages are welcome and bring a friend too! Feel free to bring a dish to share, your favorite games, or a deck of cards. Mark your calendars and invite your friends and family to come along as well!

Epiphany Service: Join us for a joint Epiphany service on Monday, January 6th at 6:45 PM at St. Paul's (Jonesville). We will join with the saints from St. Paul's (Jonesville) and St. John's (White Creek) to worship our Lord and celebrate this festival day. There will also be a supper served starting at 6:00 PM.

Fellowship Friday @ 5: Join us on Friday, January 10th for Fellowship Friday @ 5. Come and enjoy a night of fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Soup and Euchre: Join us on Sunday, February 2nd beginning at 5 PM for our Soup and Euchre party! It will be \$5 for soup and \$5 for euchre. Invite a friend or two and enjoy a night of soup, cards, and fun.

LCMS COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Lutheran SGO: Take full advantage of all the benefits of donating to the Lutheran SGO and support the students and families of Trinity Lutheran High School. For their generosity, donors may receive a 50% state tax credit. Donations can take many forms, from cash to credit cards to commodities. <https://www.lutheransgo.org/donations/index.php> Have questions or want to learn more? Contact Erin Brooks at 812-524-8547 or ebrooks@trinitycougars.org

Athletic Director: The WCLS Board of Education is seeking applicants for Athletic Director for next School Year. The position is being offered as three separate roles: Fall Sport Athletic Director (\$1,500 stipend); Winter Sport Athletic Director (\$1,500 stipend); and Concessions Manager (\$1,000 stipend). Alternatively, an individual may choose to apply to take on the entire role (\$5,000 stipend). Please contact Mrs. Vandercar or athleticdirector@whitecreek.org for job descriptions. Interested parties should complete this form and return it to the school office (marked to the attention of the Board of Education) by January 6. Thank you for considering how you could help. Our school's athletic program is not possible without this type of leadership!

FROM THE OFFICE

Contact Information: We would like to be able to contact everyone in a quick and timely manner. If you could please contact Camden or Pastor to update your contact information, especially phone number and email, that would help us tremendously and be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

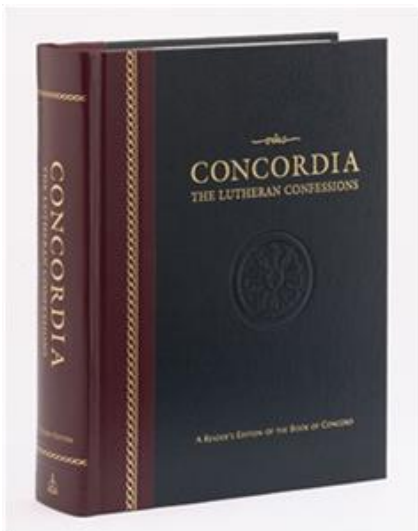
2025 Offering Envelopes: Hello everyone! I wanted to inform you that 2025 envelopes are now in your mailboxes, or sitting, in the narthex of the church. Please let me know if I did not provide you with them, and if you would like to have envelopes. Hope everyone has a great month!

Church Constitution: If you would like to sign the church constitution, please contact Camden.

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On the web: www.stpeterwaymansville.com • Facebook: www.facebook.com/StPeterEvangelicalLutheranChurch



Book of Concord Corner

“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord... To explain all these individual points does not belong to brief sermons for children. That belongs to fuller sermons that extend throughout the entire year, especially at those times that are appointed for the purpose of treating each article at length – for Christ’s birth, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, and so on. Yes, the entire Gospel that we preach is based on this point, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rests. It is so rich and complete that we can never learn it fully.” (Large Catechism, Part 2, 32-33)

Soup Supper & Euchre Party

St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church

11750 W 930 S

Waymansville, Indiana

Sunday, February 2nd

Soup Supper begins at 5:00 PM

Euchre Party begins at 6:00 PM

Soup Supper \$5



Euchre Party \$5



St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church Calendar

January 2025

Ushers: Bill Finke

Acolytes: **January 5** – Noah Nye
 January 19 – John Nye

January 12 – Abe Acton
January 26 – Noah Nye

Communion Set-up & Clean-up:

1/5, 12, 19, 26: open

Parish Hall Cleaning: open

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Upcoming Events:</i> 2/2: Soup & Euchre Party 2/7: Game Night			1	2	3	4
5 <i>Second Sunday after Christmas</i> 9:00 AM – Divine Service 10:15 AM – Pastor’s Bible Study & Sunday School	6 <i>Epiphany of Our Lord</i> 6:45 PM – Joint Epiphany Service (Jonesville)	7 6 PM – Elders meeting	8	9 7 PM – Council meeting	10 5 PM – Fellowship Friday	11
12 <i>The Baptism of Our Lord</i> 9:00 AM – Divine Service 10:15 AM – Quarterly Voters’ Meeting & Sunday School (Bible study to follow as time allows) 11:30 AM – Youth Catechesis 5 PM – Book of Concord study	13	14 9 AM-2 PM – Pastor @ Circuit meeting	15	16	17	18
19 <i>Second Sunday after the Epiphany</i> 9:00 AM – Divine Service 10:15 AM – Pastor’s Bible Study, & Sunday School 11:30 AM – Youth Catechesis 5 PM – Youth Group	20	21	22 6:30 PM – Wednesday Night Bible Study	23	24	25
26 <i>Third Sunday after the Epiphany</i> 9:00 AM – Divine Service 10:15 AM – Pastor’s Bible Study & Sunday School 11:30 AM – Youth Catechesis	27	28	29 6:30 PM – Wednesday Night Bible Study	30	31	