



BETHANY BEACON

January 2019 . Kenosha & Somers

*The Christian Church has been blessed with many marvelous hymns in the last 2000 years. Over the next several months, Pastor Prange's newsletter articles will share insights on some the greatest hymns of Christendom and how they emphasize the great paradoxes of our Christian faith. This month we consider the ancient Christmas hymn, *Of the Father's Love Begotten*.*

Great Paradoxes in Christian Hymns: Hidden and Revealed Of the Father's Love Begotten

"No one has ever seen God, but God the Only Begotten, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18).

What an invitation those shepherds received as they watched over their flocks by night! Simply put, the divine messenger bid the shepherds: "Go to Bethlehem and see the Lord Almighty face-to-face!" Yet the angel's instructions seemed strange at best. "This will be a sign to you," the angel explained. "You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Yes, go and see God; he's the baby! What?

Martin Luther could not help but marvel at the shepherds' obedient faith. They went and saw and believed. "If I had come to Bethlehem and seen it," Luther once admitted, "I would have said, 'This does not make sense. Can this be the Messiah? This is sheer nonsense.' I would not have let myself be found inside the stable."

A basic tenet of our Christian faith is that God cannot be seen. He is the One "who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6:16). True, God is hidden, yet amazingly he also reveals himself to us! How? By hiding himself within our weak, human flesh in the person of Christ. God shows up in – of all places! – a manger. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). What a paradox: *God reveals himself by hiding himself in human flesh!*

This mysterious paradox is skillfully treated in the ancient hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten," (CW 35) written by a fourth-century hymnwriter named Prudentius. Originally directed against the Arian heresy (which denied the full divinity of Jesus), this Christmas hymn enables us to express our faith over against the modern denials of the important Scriptural truth that Jesus is both true God and true man. It also helps us confess that our unseen God has unveiled himself to us in love.

The hymn opens with the reminder that our Savior was begotten (fathered) by God the Father before "the worlds began to be," hidden in eternity. Now this same God has "revealed his sacred face," not in splendor but in deepest humility, as "the babe, the world's Redeemer" (stanza 2). Yes, this helpless child is God "whom heav'n-taught singers sang of old with one accord; whom the Scriptures of the prophets promised in their faithful word" (stanza 3). Now we too offer our Christmas praises "evermore and evermore"!

Our Christian faith is one of paradoxes: the eternal God is both hidden and revealed!

Meeting of Area Congregational Reps

On December 8, five representatives of Bethany (Mike Curran, president; Dave Riley, Long-Range Planning Committee chair; Principal Steve Schultz; and Pastors Pagel and Prange) met with a group of leaders from the other Kenosha-area WELS congregations to have an informal discussion about the future of congregational and school ministry in the Kenosha area. In October 2018, Bethany unanimously approved a Long-Range Plan which recommended that we look for ways to combine school and congregational ministry efforts with our Kenosha-area ministry partners to avoid reduplication of efforts and to capitalize on growing ministry opportunities along the I-94 corridor. This meeting gave participants an opportunity to share information about their current ministry efforts and to spitball ideas on the direction of future ministry efforts in southeastern Wisconsin. A next meeting is planned for late February or early March 2019.

Bethany Pastors Attend WELS Multi-Site Conference

In November, Pastors Pagel and Prange joined more than one hundred pastors, teachers, staff ministers, laypeople, and other ministry leaders from across the country in Pewaukee for the 2018 WELS National Multi-Site Conference. Attendees met to discuss the development of multi-site ministries throughout WELS.

Multi-site churches like Bethany preach, teach, and carry out other ministry work from more than one physical location. These additional sites can help the congregation share the gospel message with new people and underserved communities. In many cases, they can also gather and use resources with increased efficiency.

Rev. Ron Koehler, pastor at Grace, a multi-site church in Tucson/Sahuarita/Benson/Vail, Ariz., led the conference's first keynote presentation. He highlighted key reasons why a congregation may launch a multi-site effort. Rev. Jon Hein, director of the Commission on Congregational Counseling, then spoke about the potential of multi-sites to expand ministry work beyond their current reach.

Four sessions of workshops gave attendees opportunities to hear about experiences with multi-site development directly from project leaders. Pastors, church elders, and lay leaders spoke about reaching specific audiences, managing multi-site finances, uniting under one mission, and more.

Rev. Paul Schupmann and Rev. David Brandt serve at St. John's, Juneau, Wis., which is officially expanding to Horicon, Wis., in June 2019. They look forward to implementing what they learned from the conference at this new multi-site. "The key concept is to grow the kingdom and continue to enable our people to share Jesus," Schupmann explained.

Congregational Meeting Set for January 29

Bethany will have its next congregational meeting on **Tuesday, January 29 at 6:30 p.m.** in the Kenosha sanctuary. Reports will be made by the pastors and the council members about the work being done in their areas of oversight.

Choir Rehearsals Begin January 22

Adult choir rehearsals will be resuming on Tuesday, January 22 at 7 p.m. in the Grades 7-8 classroom. We will be getting music ready for Unity Sunday, Lent, and Easter. Come and join us for singing, fellowship and the occasional laugh!

Questions? Contact Lena Petermann at lenap@bethanykenosha.org

PTS BWW Fundraiser

The Bethany Parent-Teacher Society (PTS) recently began a Buffalo Wild Wings Fundraiser. The program will run through February 24. Just visit Buffalo Wild Wings, show your BWW Teammate Card, and the school's PTS will receive 10% of the sale. BWW Teammate Cards are available in the entryway at both locations.

Cleaning Day Scheduled for January 19

We will have a cleaning day at our Kenosha campus on January 19 beginning at 9 a.m. All Bethany members are encouraged to lend a hand since the Bethany buildings belong to all of us. Help us put on our best face for people who might be visiting our facilities. We want our buildings to convey just how special our Savior and our ministry of his Word are to us. Join us!

Thank You

The Bethany pastors, faculty, and staff would like to thank everyone in the congregation for their Christmas wishes and gifts. Your prayers and generosity are very much appreciated. The Lord grant you all his richest blessings in the new year!



Leaders of ELS, LCMS, and WELS meet

About 20 leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) met in Florida on Nov 27-28 to continue the informal discussions begun in 2012. At this seventh annual meeting, participants updated each other on news from their respective synods. They also spent time discussing the doctrine of creation and its relation to science—a topic about which they found themselves in agreement on the key issues.

Looking ahead to the future, participants debated whether or not it is proper to begin formal doctrinal discussions with a view to restoring fellowship between ELS/WELS and the LCMS. Given the issues that separate us, it was decided that such a move would be premature at this time.

Rather, the group decided to continue with informal discussions, with another meeting planned for December 2019. At this meeting, the group will discuss the doctrine of justification. They also will precisely articulate and commit to writing some of the specific points of controversy between our synods.

These intersynodical discussions, conducted outside of the framework of church fellowship, have been useful in clarifying our synodical positions and in sharing information on topics of mutual interest. This latest meeting was no exception. Many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to get together and to keep the lines of communication open.

Grace: WELS Mission in Vietnam

WELS has been given the opportunity to take the gospel to the Hmong people living in the country of Vietnam. Not only has the Hmong Fellowship Church (HFC) asked WELS to teach and train its pastors in Lutheran doctrine and practice, but WELS has also been invited by the Vietnamese government to establish a theological training facility in Hanoi.

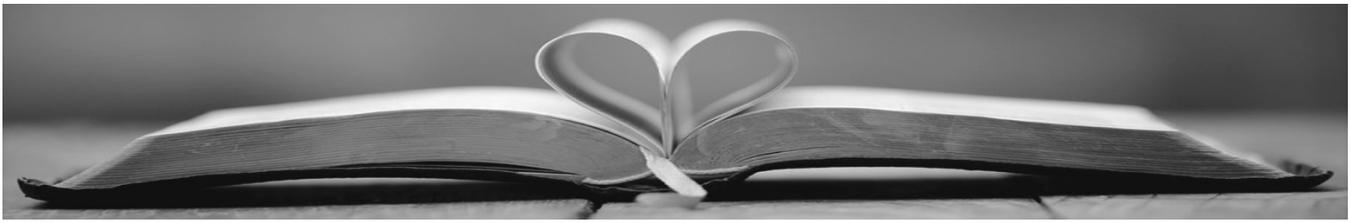
On December 1, WELS launched a special synodwide offering to support Hmong outreach in Vietnam. Through this opportunity, God's grace can be shared with the more than 100,000 members who make up the HFC and the 2 million Hmong living in Vietnam and the surrounding countries. The goal of the "Grace—Hmong outreach in Vietnam" offering is to receive gifts totaling \$2 million by June 30, 2019, to fund the land purchase, building construction, and the first two years of operational costs for the theological training facility in Hanoi.

To learn more about this mission opportunity, visit wels.net/vietnamhmongoutreach

Grace Notes

Preparing for Worship at Bethany

- On the weekend of **Sunday, January 6**, we will celebrate the **Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord** at Bethany. January 6 is the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the day on which Christians have traditionally celebrated the arrival of the magi (or wise men) to visit the newborn Savior. In truth, the magi probably did not arrive soon after the birth of Jesus. Neither did they find Jesus lying in a manger, as the shepherds had. St. Matthew tells us that the magi found Jesus' family living in a house (Matthew 2:11). Wicked King Herod's later order to kill all the boys in Bethlehem two years and younger (Matthew 2:16) also suggests that Jesus was probably no longer an infant by the time the wise men arrived. Epiphany means "revelation," and it is a celebration of God's revealing his love and forgiveness to us in Jesus. The feast and season of Epiphany is also a reminder to us that God wants his message of salvation to be proclaimed and revealed to all nations, since Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
- On the weekend of **Sunday, January 13**, Bethany will be celebrating the **Baptism of Our Lord**. This Christian festival is always observed on the first Sunday after Epiphany (January 6). The baptism of Jesus is one of three important events in the life of Jesus that are recorded in all four Gospels (the other two being his feeding of the five thousand and the account of his death and resurrection). In his baptism Jesus received God's promise of forgiveness for the sins he was bearing, though these sins were not his own (John 1:29). He also received the assurance of his heavenly Father's love and his abiding presence during the struggles of his earthly ministry (Matthew 3:17). This important event also marked the public announcement to the world that Jesus is God's one and only Son, the promised Savior of all people. How appropriate it is for us to celebrate this historic happening; please join us!
- Bethany's new **communion distribution schedule** will be implemented beginning in January, as approved by the congregation in October 2018. Holy Communion will be celebrated at Bethany-Kenosha on the first and third Sundays of every month. Holy Communion will be celebrated at Bethany-Kenosha on Saturday night and at Bethany-Somers on Sunday on the second and fourth weekends of every month. When there is a fifth Sunday of a month, Communion will be celebrated at all four services. The rotation will remain the same during the summer months with the exception that Holy Communion will always be celebrated at the Wednesday evening service at Somers. Though Holy Communion will no longer be available in almost every service at Bethany, please don't hesitate to speak with Pastors Pagel or Prange if you desire communion when it's not being offered in public worship. **Arrangements can always be made to commune you privately, if desired.**



Parish Education Opportunities

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Sunday Morning Bible Study

- Pastor Pagel will begin a new four-lesson Sunday study of the book of Daniel entitled **Living Faithfully in Babylon**. Daniel is a wonderful example of how a child of God can live his faith respectfully, yet with integrity, even when surrounded by unbelievers. The first two lessons will be held at Somers (8:45 a.m.) on January 6 & 13 and at Kenosha (9:15 a.m.) on January 20 & 27.
- Pastor Prange will be finishing the Sunday study of Romans 1-8 at Kenosha on January 6 (9:15 a.m.). Then he will lead a new eight-lesson study of Acts 1-2 entitled **How Does the Christian Church Grow?** We can learn much from St. Luke's historical account of the first Christians about how the Church grows with God's blessing, and you might be surprised what you'll learn. The first two lessons will be held at Somers (8:45 a.m.) on January 20 & 27.

Midweek Bible Study

- **Studying the Sunday Scriptures** takes place at Somers every Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. Pastor Prange leads this weekly study that helps prepare you for weekend worship. Attendees have commented how much more they now get out of worship because they've studied the gospel and lessons first. Our group has grown in numbers and knowledge. Join us for this informative study.
- The **Wednesday Evening Bible Study** resumes on Wednesday, January 9, at the home of Larry and Deb Dubis when they will begin taking a look at the Life and Ministry of the Messiah. We will journey back to the time of Jesus and discover how the events of his day impacted his life and ministry - and how it affects ours today. Please contact Larry or Deb for additional information at ldubis@wi.rr.com or 262-948-3269.

Evening Seminar

- Our next Evening Seminar will take place on Monday, January 28 at 7 p.m. at Somers. Participants will learn about and discuss the First Article of the Nicene Creed. What is the Nicene Creed and where does it come from? How long have Christians been confessing this creed, and why is it so important? What do we mean when we confess that God is our Father, and why does it matter? All of these issues and more will be addressed by Pastor Prange. Join us for this one-night study.

Monthly Bible Study

- On the last Wednesday of every month, a group meets with Pastor Pagel for **Breakfast Bible Study** at Perkins in Pleasant Prairie at 8:15 a.m. The group is currently studying the miracles of Jesus and will meet next on January 30.

Saturday Morning Bible Study

- The Saturday Morning Bible Study meets every other Saturday at 9 a.m. in the home of Gary and Rudee Koepke. This month they will be meeting on January 12 & 26 and turning their attention to the book of Joshua. .



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