

THE BETHANY
BEACON

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V O L U M E 1 , N U M B E R 2

“Let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:16)

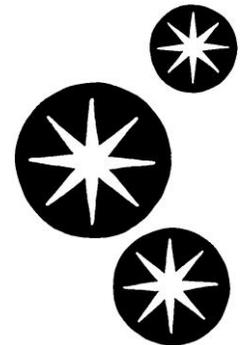


The Christian Church has been blessed with many marvelous hymns in the last 2000 years. Over the next several months, Pastor Prange’s newsletter articles will share insights on some the greatest hymns of Christendom and how they emphasize the great paradoxes of our Christian faith. This month we consider the Epiphany hymn, How Lovely Shines the Morning Star.

Great Paradoxes in Christian Hymns: Darkness and Light How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2).

Of all the spiritual analogies we find in the Scriptures, the one most-often employed is the analogy of darkness and light. It is easy for us to appreciate: darkness is bad; light is good. Our Savior Jesus made use of this analogy more than once in the Gospels. For instance, in John 3:19 Jesus spoke of himself as the Light of the world: “Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” Light represents the holiness and perfection of God; darkness represents the deep blight of our human sin and imperfection. Nothing is darker than death.



When Jesus our Light crashed through the strong walls of this sinful world, he was entering the very realm of darkness. He came to utterly conquer those spiritual powers of darkness – sin and death – and their wily overlord, the Devil. By his atoning death and powerful resurrection from the dead, he did just that! He is the Great Light that we, who were walking in darkness, have seen. He is our Morning Star.

This side of heaven, however, we continue our struggle with the conquered powers of darkness. Though purchased by God for an eternity through Jesus’ blood, at the present our sinful flesh still clings feverishly to redeemed souls. Reflecting on this truth, Martin Luther

described Christians this way: *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time, saints and sinners, holy and sinful). At the same time, living in the darkness of sin while walking in the light of Christ. Yes, Christians live in darkness *and* light at the same time. What a paradox!

This paradox is touched upon in one of the greatest Christian hymns ever written, “How Brightly Shines the Morning Star” (CW 79). Often referred to as “the queen of Lutheran chorales,” this Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608) hymn looks back fondly upon the day when Jesus’ light first entered the world. It delights in the Light that Jesus now provides through the dark days of this life. Finally, it looks forward with “deep yearning” to that Day when God’s people will shed the last remnants of their darkness and “there will be no more night” (Revelation 22:5).

Until then, our Christian life is a paradox: we live in darkness that has been conquered by the Light!

♪ GRACE NOTES ♪

Preparing for Worship at Bethany

During the month of February, Bethany will be celebrating a **Mission Festival**, when we highlight the mission that Jesus has given his Church to proclaim the good news of salvation in all the world. We can offer our assistance toward that work in a variety of ways. Find a way to get involved in congregational or school ministry. Every volunteer moment moves Bethany’s mission forward in a way that might not be immediately obvious. Support Bethany’s mission and ministry generously with your offerings. Keep Bethany’s pastors, teachers, and other ministry leaders in your prayers on a regular basis. And don’t be afraid to let them know that you’re praying for them. What an encouragement that is!

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On the weekend of **Sunday, February 3**, we will celebrate the **Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord** at Bethany, celebrating that day when Mary and Joseph presented Jesus before the Lord in the temple (Luke 2:22-40). In some traditions, this day marks the end of the Christmas season. This annual church festival actually falls on Saturday, February 2 (the fortieth day after Christmas), marking the day when Mary would have been ceremonially cleansed from having given birth to a child (Leviticus 12:2-8). It was during this trip to the



temple that the faithful believer Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised the Lord for having given him the special honor of seeing the Savior before he died. Simeon's words remind us of our God-given mission to proclaim the good news about Jesus to all nations, since our Savior is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32).

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On the weekend of **Sunday, February 24**, Bethany will celebrate the **Festival of St. Matthias, Apostle** as part of its Mission Festival. The story of Matthias becoming the apostle who replaced Judas Iscariot after Jesus' resurrection is told by Luke in Acts 1. This account is a wonderful reminder that the Lord Jesus wants qualified pastors and teachers to serve his people through a faithful proclamation of his Word and that he calls these servants through his Church. Part of the Church's mission then is to prepare men and women for fulltime gospel ministry, as Matthias was many centuries ago. As part of our celebration of his festival day, **Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor Bradley Wordell** will serve as the guest preacher at Kenosha on Sunday morning. He will also make a presentation between services at 9:15 a.m. Professor Wordell spent a number of years serving as a missionary in Japan before becoming the World Missions Professor at our seminary in Mequon, Wis. Much of his time is spent traveling to faraway places in order to help train seminarians in world mission settings throughout the world. What a privilege to have him come to Bethany!

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Looking ahead to next month, on **Wednesday, March 6**, we will commemorate the beginning of the **season of Lent** with **Ash Wednesday worship at 3:30 p.m. (Kenosha) and 6:30 p.m. (Somers)** Both services will include a celebration of Holy Communion. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the 40-day period of repentance and reflection that precedes our celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead on Easter morning.

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Unity Sunday will take place on **Sunday, March 10**, with one weekend service at Shoreland Lutheran High School in Somers at 10 a.m. There will be no other services that weekend. The Shoreland Festival Choir will be one of three choirs singing that Sunday. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information.



PARISH EDUCATION

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ

- During February Pastor Pagel will continue a 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.
- Pastor Prange will continue his eight-lesson study of Acts 1-12 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.
- **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** continues through February at the home of Larry and Deb Dubis. They have been taking a look at the **Life and Ministry of the Messiah**. 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.
- On **Monday and Tuesday, February 25 & 26**, we will continue a study of the Nicene Creed as part of our **Evening Somers Seminar Series**. On those evenings we will be discussing what the Creed has to teach about the person and work of God's Son, Jesus Christ, in particular. These words about Jesus are in many ways the central focus of the Nicene Creed. We will explore some of the ways that our Christian faith is set apart from the other world religions and the special worldview that Christians have as a result of our faith in Jesus. Join us for this two-night seminar, beginning at 7 p.m. each evening.



- 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. **Please note that this month's class might be moved to the first Wednesday in March.**
- The **Saturday Morning Bible Study** meets every other Saturday at 9 a.m in the home of Gary and Rudee Koepke (3327 86th Street, Kenosha). This month they will be meeting on February 9 & 23 and continue their study of the book of Joshua.

CARING AND SHARING

News from Bethany and Beyond

Subscribe to the Bethany E-News and Notes

If you'd like to receive a weekly email in your inbox with all the Bethany News & Notes, please send an email to the Bethany office (blsoffice@bethanykenosha.org) to be included on our emailing list. The E-News & Notes will include the full range of news from Bethany Church and School and elsewhere, including Shoreland and WELS info, all at your fingertips.

Bethany Leaders Discuss School Choice Possibility

In recent weeks Bethany leaders have been discussing the possibility of Bethany School entering Wisconsin's School Choice program under the umbrella of Friedens Lutheran School. A provision in the state law allows schools that have not previously qualified for the program to enter the program through another school entity. The Bethany Long-Range Plan approved by the congregation at a special October 2018 meeting resolved to explore cooperative educational ministry in the Kenosha area to avoid unnecessary duplication of educational efforts and to maximize the use of teachers, space, and other educational assets. This important discussion is seen as a necessary first step in that process.

Special Congregational Meeting Set for February 24 to Discuss School Recommendation

Bethany will have a special congregational meeting on Sunday, February 24 at 12 p.m. in the Kenosha sanctuary to act on a recommendation from the Church Council that Bethany School enter the Wisconsin School Choice program under the umbrella of Friedens Lutheran School. Information on this recommendation will be distributed to the congregation prior to the meeting. Please attend this important meeting.

Bethany School to Hold an Open House and Kindergarten Visit Day

Our school is always looking for new students and families who are interested in an excellent and affordable education that provides the eternal bonus of Jesus' saving promises. An open house for prospective families is scheduled for Saturday, February 2, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Do you

know of someone who is eligible for Kindergarten next year? Do you have a friend who would like to enroll their child in a different school? Share the gift of a Christian education and tell them about our open house. We will give tours, and the teachers will be available to answer questions about their classrooms. A special Kindergarten visit day is also set for Tuesday, February 5. Anyone who will be five years of age by September 1 is eligible to attend kindergarten. All prospective kindergartners are invited to attend from 8:30-11 a.m.

55+ Group to Meet for Food and Fellowship

The Bethany 55+ Group will meet at the Gateway Cafe on Thursday, February 21 at 3:30 p.m. If you've never joined the group for one of their get-togethers, now's as good a time as ever. Expect to have a delightful time with your fellow Christians. Please RSVP to Kathy Becker by February 18 at 262-818-2901

New Pictorial Directory Coming Soon

Member pictures have been taken and submitted, and the process of putting together the 2018 pictorial directory is well underway. Members can expect them to be available sometime in February. We pray that this directory will be a blessing to the congregation, as we seek ways to know one another better and to work together for the mission and ministry of the congregation. Grab one as soon as they become available and use it often!

Pastor Pagel to Take Time Away

Pastor Pagel is continuing his CrossTrain peer coaching group in 2019. Their annual conference is in Austin, Tex., February 11-14. The church council also granted him four weeks for sabbatical leave. He will be taking two weeks in Phoenix, from February 15-28, and two weeks in late March.

Dorothy Romanowski with the Lord Jesus

Bethany member Dorothy Romanowski was called to her heavenly home on January 10 following a brief hospital stay. Christian funeral was held at Bethany on January 15. Burial was at Sunset Ridge Memorial Park, where she awaits Jesus' summons to rise on the Last Day. We pray God's comfort for her husband John and family. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!



PTS BWW Fundraiser Continues

The Bethany Parent-Teacher Society (PTS) continues its Buffalo Wild Wings Fundraiser. The program runs 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. Turn in a copy of your receipt to the office to keep track of the funds raised for the Grades 7-8 class trip to Washington DC next year.

Pastor Prange Preaches for Hometown Anniversary Service

On Sunday, January 13, Pastor Prange had an opportunity to take a stroll down memory lane when he was invited to preach at his 60th anniversary celebration of his boyhood congregation, Peace Lutheran Church in Janesville. His father served that congregation as pastor from 1958-1998, his entire ministry. Even though the Pranges have been gone from Janesville for twenty

years now, many of the faces remain the same, though with a few more wrinkles. In his sermon, Pastor Prange tied the congregation's anniversary celebration to the Church's celebration of the Baptism of Jesus on the Sunday after Epiphany. Based on St. Paul's words in Titus 3, he pointed out that Jesus' baptism and our baptisms demonstrate that it's not about us. Our salvation, our lives in this world, and eternal lives are all about Jesus. Apart from him and his saving work, we would have nothing. But in him, we have everything. In his love, Jesus makes it all about us.

WELS PUBLISHES ANNUAL REPORT

The Wisconsin Synod's Annual Report, "Your gifts, God's blessings" is now available online. The 2019 report highlights the blessings that God has showered on WELS through the gifts of its members.

Learn more about:

- ten Martin Luther College students who volunteered with WELS Christian Aid and Relief to help with the cleanup and rebuilding of Amazing Grace, Panama City, Fla., following Hurricane Michael;
- Libby Redfield, a young WELS member who was born blind and is blessed by Christian materials from WELS Mission for the Visually Impaired;
- Wisick Jeffrey, a pastor for the Lutheran Church of Central Africa—Malawi, who was censured by his family for turning his back on his Muslim heritage; and
- Manaporn Phaosricharoen, a college student who sought answers about God's Word from Wisconsin Lutheran Chapel, Madison, Wis.

The report includes photos of Christian brothers and sisters around the world, stories of faith, updates on WELS' ministry, and a summary of WELS' financial picture. Rev. Kurt Lueneburg, director of WELS Ministry of Christian Giving, likens WELS' annual report to a family photo album, personal investment report, and prayer list, all wrapped into one.

"The report is part photo album with pictures of fellow Christians and brief narratives that vividly chronicle the gospel ministry Jesus enabled us to conduct together last year," says Lueneburg. "The document also, like an investment report, describes God's blessings on our combined talents, testimonies, time, treasures, and all other gifts we gratefully offered our Savior. Then, the report is a prayer list identifying reasons for which we praise, thank, and serve our Lord, as well as many initiatives that we ask our heavenly Father to guide, bless, and support in the coming year."

To view the report online, visit wels.net/annualreport. Want to learn even more about how God is blessing your gifts to WELS? Schedule a Christian giving counselor to present a PowerPoint presentation to your congregation that summarizes the information in the annual report. Contact the Ministry of Christian Giving at 800-827-5482 for more information.

NEW HOPE IN UGANDA

“Come over and help us!” This first century request came from a man in Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Convinced that this plea was an outreach opportunity from God, a four-man team (Luke, Paul, Silas, and Timothy) set out on a mission journey to answer the call and share the gospel of Jesus. They traveled to various locations, spoke to the local people, visited the places of prayer, “reasoned with the people from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead . . .” (Acts 17:2,3) The gospel did amazing things. It gave the people new hope.

“Come over and help us!” This twenty-first century request came from a man in Bugiri, Uganda in December 2018. Convinced that this was an outreach opportunity from God, a three-man team was formed and set out on a mission journey to answer the call and share the gospel message of Jesus. What Paul and his team did in Macedonia and beyond, the three-man team did in Uganda: traveled to various places, spoke to the local people, visited the places of prayer and expounded the Scriptures. By God’s grace, the results were the same: the gospel worked wonders and it gave people in Uganda new hope.

The first century mission opportunity came by way of a vision (Acts 16:9). December’s opportunity came via an email. The request for help came from a man named Makisimu Musa, a pastor leading a fledgling church body in Uganda. Back in 2008, he caught wind of a Lutheran church body in America called WELS as well as a synod in Zambia and Malawi called the LCCA. He heard about their sound doctrine and practice and wanted to know more. He consulted with his fellow pastors and evangelists and together they decided it was time for them to reach out for help. Frustrated with church politics, confused with false teachings, discouraged with a lack of Biblically sound materials, and uncertain of a God-pleasing way forward, they sent the message: “Come over and help us!”



Pastor Makisimu Musa and his family

To read the rest of the story, go to www.wels.net/new-hope-in-uganda

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