



The Echo

The bimonthly newsletter of Epiphany Lutheran Church

November-December 2020 ✕ Volume 26 • Issue 6

The Lesson of 2020

We are all familiar with the adage (perhaps some you feel its more of a cliché, an overused and now trite phrase) that every cloud has a silver lining. It seems this phrase finds some of its origins with John Milton, a 17th century English poet, and comes into widespread use in the 19th century. The basic meaning is that, no matter what bad situation may come, something good always comes from it.

If there's ever been a cloud, 2020 is it! COVID-19, riots, and a contentious election cycle, just to name a few things, have made this year one we're eager to forget. We long for the wide-eyed, youthful optimism of January when we turned the page to a new year, not knowing what was in store.

How does a Christian respond to a year that has been miserable in so many ways, that has highlighted the damage and destruction wrought by sin? Repentance is always a good place to start. It's good for us to be honest and retrospective, to acknowledge our sin and to realize that, because of our sin against God and one another, we have deserved far worse than what 2020 has brought. This sobering honesty puts the year in a much better perspective. We endure discomfort and displeasure now, but the Lord has not abandoned us. He is still our Father and we are still His dear children. Viruses and elections and strife cannot change that status. Thanks be to God!

The next Christian response is to look for the good that has come from this year, the cloud's silver lining. Though the lockdowns in spring robbed so many of us of anticipated events like Easter, concerts, commencements, and the like, it did force so many of us to slow down and to spend time at home with our families. So many across our country have shared that they feel the abrupt nature of the change forced them to reassess priorities and they realized that they weren't spending time with family the way they ought to. That's a tremendous blessing! Similarly,

churches across our Synod saw a tremendous surge in people asking for devotional materials and videos, Bible studies, Christian literature, and the like that Pastors and other church workers were working overtime to produce resources for their congregations. What negative comes from more time in the Word?! While I'm not discounting the negatives of the lockdown (the increased suicide rates, the uptick in substance abuse, and other negative trends that came as a result), it was not entirely bad. It forced many of us to reassess our priorities and gave us the needed "kick in the rear" to reorder our lives.

Most importantly, however, 2020 has increased our discontentment with this world and this life. As the beloved hymn teaches us to sing, "I'm but a stranger here; heaven is my home." This year and all that has come with it has given new voice to St. Paul's words to the Philippians: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a

An Important Note

Beginning this month, we will be experimenting with a bimonthly newsletter instead of the traditional monthly edition.

Due to the alterations brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, there are fewer events occurring at Epiphany and with our Christian friends in the region. This means there is less to advertise and to feature afterwards. As restrictions ease and life begins to return to normal, our plan is to return to a monthly publication schedule.

Watch the January-February issue for some exciting new features to make The Echo a blessing and a great resource to you in its new format.

desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil 1:21-23). The struggles of 2020 have reminded us that this world and this life is not all there is. Something far better awaits us as we cross from death to life and wait with Christ for the Last Day when He ushers in the new heavens and the new earth.

As the young Church endured the torture and murderous rage of the Jews and the Romans, they built their hope on what we confess each week in the Creed: "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." They greeted one another with an Aramaic word, *maranatha*, which means "O Lord, Come!" They daily encouraged one another with that promise of Jesus to return, to bring about the final destruction of sin and the devil. They rested in the closing words of St. John's Revelation: "Surely I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20)

2020 has helped us renew this fervent prayer: Come, Lord Jesus! It has made us eager for the messages of the end of the Church Year and the Season of Advent—not the celebration of Christmas, but that eager expectation of the Lord's appearing. New eagerness will fill our singing and our praying this Advent: "Savior of the Nations, Come!" "O Lord, how shall I meet You?" "Come, Thou precious Ransom, Come!" "Lo! He comes with clouds descending!"

So, as we pass through these last two months of 2020 and throughout the rest of the days of our earthly pilgrimage, we do so with the words of St. Paul in our minds, and on our hearts and lips: "For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:7-8).

You belong to Jesus! He untied Himself to you in the water of Holy Baptism. He feeds you with His Body and Blood. COVID-19, civil unrest, deep political divisions, and all the rest of this world's evil cannot change that. Regardless of what happens to you in 2020 and beyond, you are the Lord's!

Peace in Christ,
Pastor Beffrey ✠



Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

I Timothy 2:1-2

It is always good for us to pray for our country and elected officials. St. Paul reminds us that they are "God's minister to you for good" (Rom 13:4). It is also important to note that Paul wrote to Timothy and the Romans about praying for the government when the government was actively murdering Christians! Pray for all in authority, even if (especially if!) their political party is different than your own.

Some good prayers for the November elections and our elected officials:

Election Day

Mighty and eternal God, we beg Your grace that our lives may be ordered by Your commands, and we ask You to bless those who govern us in Your name. Bless our president, the Congress, our governor, the legislature and all local officials, that pursuing the path of justice they may act with humility and honor for the good of all people. Give wisdom to all who vote and bless its result, that our nation may elect our leaders peacefully and orderly; through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Elected Officials

Almighty God, You have given us this good land as our heritage. Grant that we remember Your generosity and constantly do Your will. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Support us in defending our liberties, and give to those whom we have entrusted the authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there may be justice and peace in our land; through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Advent and Christmas at Epiphany

Midweek Advent Services

Wednesday, December 2, 9, 16, and 23

7:00 PM

Note: We will not be offering meals before this year's Advent services.

Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols ◀

Thursday, December 24

7:00 PM

Christmas Day Divine Service ◀

Friday, December 25

9:15 AM

The Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist ◀

Sunday, December 27

9:15 AM

◀ - Indicates services that will be livestreamed on YouTube.



Your loose change matters—and makes a difference!

If you've been around the Lutheran world any length of time, you have undoubtedly heard about the LWML, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, and their *mites*. Maybe you're not sure what they're talking about or why these women are always asking for your change! The easiest way to answer that question is to say that *the spare change of thousands of people adds up and does wonderful things!* So, collect your change and donate it to the LWML to help with the spread of the Gospel and human care needs across the globe.

Why are they called Mites?

Based on the Biblical account of the widow's mite (Luke 21:1-4), the Mite Box is intended for regular contributions of "mites"—offerings above and beyond the support given to congregations and the LCMS. Mite Box contributions amount to millions of dollars that fund district and national mission grants and implement the LWML program.

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on" (Mark 12:41-43).

How can I collect my change?

The easiest way is to use a "Mite Box," a small paper-board box that can hold your spare change. You can get a mite box from the district, zone, or LWML office, and our congregation. They are available to all, not just women. This is a good way to introduce giving to your children! The Widow's Mite

The Mite Boxes

Over the years, many Lutheran Ladies Aid societies used a box to gather funds in support of local and synod ministries. Under the original 1928 Lutheran Women's Missionary Endeavor organizational plan, each woman in every congregation would receive a Mite Box if she participated in the Ladies Aid. Receipts from the 92 Ladies Aid societies totaled \$6,651.31 in 1930.

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League, formally recognized by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1942, required by the newly adopted constitution and bylaws, that 25% of all missionary contributions be given to the national organization, shared from the districts.

At the 1953 convention, delegates reaffirmed the policy of raising funds only through voluntary offerings. Instead of "mite boxes" some societies called their in-gathering devices "blessing boxes" or "mission boxes" or "thankoffering boxes." The first Mite Box design had space for districts to imprint local messages. In publications and speeches, Leaguers were reminded



Thanksgiving Eve Divine Service

Wednesday, November 25 • 7:00 PM

not to just tuck their Mite Box away out of sight and then on the day of the meeting take out a dollar bill, put it in an envelope and hand it to the secretary. Among the suggestions offered were:

- Put your pennies in the box at the end of each day
- Say "thank you" with an appropriate amount whenever calamity or misfortune has been averted
- Empty all your loose change from your kitchen coin bowl into the box on meeting day

Throughout the decades, Lutheran women have stepped out in faith, setting goals and trusting God to move the hearts of His people to give generously to LWML to proclaim the Gospel.

Mite Boxes have changed in color and design over the years, but what has never changed is the dedication of freely given offerings for the purpose of reaching out to others with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Districts still retain 75% of mite offerings for the work of the LWML at that level. National mites fund over \$1 million in mission grants. See Mission Grants for the current grant recipients and payments.

What happens with the money?

After the mites are collected by the congregation's LWML chapter, the coins are counted and deposited in the bank. A check for that amount is sent to the local LWML Zone (all the churches in a given area with an LWML group). The zone forwards the money to the LWML District, and from there 25% goes to the national, Synod-level LWML while 75% stays with the District for its work.

Who receives the money?

At each District and Synod LWML convention *Mission Grants* are received and selected by the assembly. These mission grants request funds for any number of projects—missionary support, food and clothing banks, medical missionary trips, and the list goes on.

Some recent recipients of LWML grants in the English District and in the Synod:

- Apple of His Eye Mission Society, an outreach to Jewish people in America.
- Salam Christian Fellowship, an outreach to Muslims in America.
- Water and the Word for rural schools in Kenya
- Mission outreach for at-risk young women in Africa

- Liberty Line, transportation to medical appointments in Lakeview, MI
- *Our own Food Truck here at Epiphany!*
- Wind River Indian Reservation Lutheran Mission
- LCMS Deaconess Ministry
- The food and clothing co-ops at both LCMS Seminaries
- Operation Barnabas Military Share food distribution at Calvary Lutheran, Mechanicsburg, PA

These are only a few of the missions and groups that have received money from the Synod and District LWML. Your spare change travels a long way from home and does a lot of good!

How much money is needed?

The national LWML set its 2019-21 mission goal at the 2019 Convention in Mobile, Alabama. This goal is **\$2.1 million!** This is the largest mission goal the LWML has ever set.

As of September 30, the national LWML has received \$1,587,345.19. *They still need to raise \$512,654.81 to meet the goal.*

The English District LWML's goal for 2020-22 is \$15,000.



Grab a Mite Box today from the table in the Narthex!

Those Serving in November-December

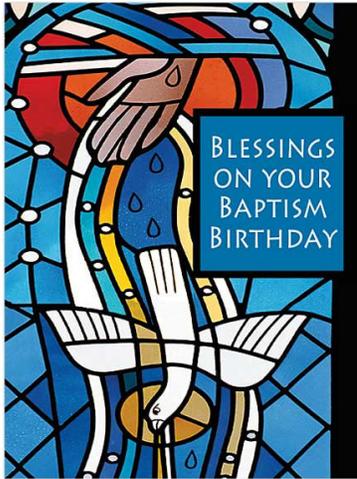
Date	Floor Elder	Serving Elder	Acolyte	Counters	Altar Guild
November 1	David Steffens	Craig Baier	Jack Cook	Rod Killips Laurie Hiscock	Bev Phipps Pam Ihle
November 8	Craig Baier	Paul Cook	Titus Baier	Dan Scott Jeremy Baier	Melissa Vanarsdal Sheila Haskill
November 15	Paul Cook	Mark MacIntosh	Charlotte Hiscock	Philip Maass Pam Ihle	Becky Steffens Cindy MacIntosh
November 22	Mark MacIntosh	David Steffens	Owen Fulk	Sandra Hoff- beck Kim Harmsen	Teresa Fulk Jen Moushegian
November 25	David Steffens	Craig Baier			Sheila Haskill
November 29	Craig Baier	Paul Cook	Wyatt Harmsen	Rod Killips Laurie Hiscock	Sheila Haskill
December 2	Paul Cook	Mark MacIntosh			Sheila Haskill
December 6	Mark MacIntosh	David Steffens	Titus Baier	Jeremy Baier Dan Scott	Bev Phipps Pam Ihle
December 9	David Steffens	Craig Baier			Sheila Haskill
December 13	Craig Baier	Paul Cook	Henry Maass	Philip Maass Pam Ihle	Becky Steffens Cindy MacIntosh
December 16	Paul Cook	Mark MacIntosh			Sheila Haskill
December 20	Mark MacIntosh	David Steffens	Charlotte Hiscock	Rod Killips Laurie Hiscock	Melissa Vanarsdal Sheila Haskill
December 23	Mark MacIntosh	David Steffens			Sheila Haskill
December 25	David Steffens	Craig Baier			Sheila Haskill
December 27	Craig Baier	Paul Cook	Jack Cook	Sandra Hoff- beck Kim Harmsen	Teresa Fulk Jen Moushegian



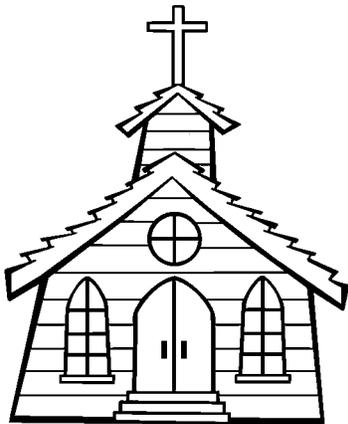
November-December Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays	Birthdays	Anniversaries
Rose Hancock (11/1)	Charlotte Hiscock (11/30)	Lee & Carol Vanarsdal (11/11)
Jody Kelsey (11/1)	Pat Velie (12/2)	Clifford & Jane Cross (11/14)
Mike Powell (11/4)	Janet Lundgren (12/5)	Philip & Sarah Maass (12/29)
Barb Schmidt (11/5)	Ken Zyk (12/11)	Randy & Laurie Hiscock (12/31)
Diana Puschel (11/13)	Paul Cook (12/13)	
Sandy Stein (11/13)	Gail Arndt (12/22)	
Jim Kelsey (11/15)	Kris Fulk (12/26)	
Becky Steffens (11/22)	Dawn Cook (12/27)	
Lynda Lueders (11/24)	Diane Zyk (12/30)	

November-December Baptism Birthdays



Bill Ihle (11/1)	Diana Puschel (12/1)
Tyler Ihle (11/1)	Becky Steffens (12/1)
Simeon Beffrey (11/15)	Olivia Fulk (12/2)
Clayton Cross (11/18)	Mike Powell (12/3)
Cindy MacIntosh (11/22)	Keith Lundgren (12/8)
Paul Cook (12/1)	Jeremy Arndt (12/9)
Dawn Cook (12/1)	Kelsey Velie (12/14)
	Stephanie Arndt (12/20)



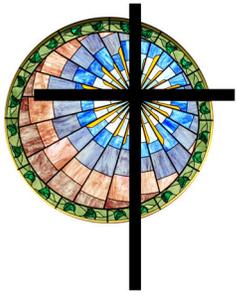
CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

**Mark your calendar for the November
Voters' Meeting**

Sunday, November 15

Immediately after the Divine Service

**Important items include setting the
2021 budget and election of officers.**



Epiphany Lutheran Church

A congregation of the English District,
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

4219 Parklane
Dorr, Michigan 49323

Epiphany and COVID-19

We take the health and safety of our congregation seriously. The Church Council has had several conversations throughout the year as we seek to respond to the effects of the virus while reminding ourselves of the importance of receiving Christ as He comes to us in Word and Sacrament.

Beginning in March, the Epiphany Council put in place some precautions to try and keep our members safe while in the church building. As COVID-19 continues to be in the communities around Epiphany, the Council has continued to review these precautions. As of the most recent Council meeting held in October, the following precautions are still in place.

- Every other pew in the Sanctuary marked as “closed” for social distancing.
- Padded chairs available in Narthex for overflow if pews are full.
- Chairs set up in cry room for overflow if pews are full.
- No passing of offering plates. The offering plate is kept stationary at the front of the Sanctuary near the Baptismal font.
- No ushers.
- Members encouraged not to kneel for Communion to limit commonly touched surfaces, however; those that desire to kneel may do so.
- Members encouraged not to congregate in the Narthex before or after the service.
- No refreshments between Divine Service and Sunday School.
- Restroom doors left open to limit touched surfaces.

The Council promises to review these precautions and discuss them at each subsequent Council meeting.