  **Reformation Lutheran Church**

 **“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”
 January 2023**

*“Behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”* -Matthew 3:16b-17-

Epiphany is a season in the church year, where Lutherans call to mind three major events in the life of Jesus. January 6th was the first of these events: the Feast of Epiphany, where we remember the visit of the wisemen to the child Jesus. On January 8th the church remembers the second major event: the Baptism of Jesus. Baptism is important for Lutherans. It’s one of our two holy sacraments (the other being Holy Communion), but it’s also one of God’s greatest gifts to us.

Jesus did not need to be baptized, but his baptism lays the groundwork for our own baptisms. Jesus refers to his death as baptism. His baptism is different from our own, but what God does for Jesus in his baptism, God also does for us in our baptisms. God proclaimed to the world that Jesus is his son. In the same way, you and I have been claimed as God’s sons and daughters. God also gave us the gift of his Holy Spirit in our baptisms. We are grafted into God forever!

This time of year we talk about presents-- gifts that we received from family and loved ones. Today we remember the gift of baptism that we received from our Heavenly Father. Baptism gives us the gifts of forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5).

God calls us to live out our baptisms each and every day! What a wondeful gift God has given to us! Why wouldn’t we want to share with others what we have received? Every time we help out a neighbor in need, we live out the promises in our baptisms. Each time we pray for enemies and foes, we live out the promises in our baptisms. We mustn’t hoard this all to ourselves. This is a gift given to us to share with others. Jesus chose to be baptized to reveal to us who he is: fully human and fully God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for claiming me as your own child. Thank you for sending Jesus to overcome death and the grave and give us life and salvation. In his name we pray. Amen

Pr.

*11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* Jeremiah 29:11

Happy New Year my friends! When you look back on 2022, what do you see? Hopefully, there are lots of good memories to make your heart happy. There are likely times of trial mixed in as well. This verse has always been one of my favorites. I used it often with my 8th grade “graduates” back when I taught middle school. It’s relevant to us as adults as well! Our heavenly Father always has good things laid out for us – both individually, and here at RLC. The year ahead for us may take some twists and turns, but we can be assured that God is always in control and will always be with us. Let’s continue to pray for His guidance and give thanksgiving for all He has done and is doing!

Peace be with you, Gabi

**A message from your Council President**: Our Annual Business Meeting will take place at some point in February. All council year end reports from 2022 need to be submitted by January 22nd.

**Your Council for 2023 - President:** Gabi Owen; **Vice President:** Wayne Ramming; **Secretary:** Tammy Jensen; **Co-Treasurers:** Cheryle Wadsworth/Pat Hunsaker; **Worship and Music:** Chuck Hunsaker; **Property:** Junior Erickson **Outreach:** EVERYONE, headed up by Pastor Jon and Tammy; **Fellowship:** EVERYONE; **Education:** Pastor Jon

**Prayer for the Church:** Heavenly Father, we know you have plans for your church – specifically for Reformation Lutheran Church – that are for your glory. The Bible says the church is your house, you dwell in the midst of your people. We ask your wisdom and support as we seek to honor your purposes for us. May Christ dwell in our hearts through faith so that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to know and share the love of Christ that surpasses all understanding. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

**Fellowship:** Let’s try to step up our fellowship time! We might try having more snacks after service, maybe plan a light potluck lunch once a month or something. Movie night? Game night? As always, all ideas are welcome!

**Property:** Our January clean-up day will be Saturday, the 28th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are welcome!

**Education: We will begin our 2023 Sunday 9:30 AM Bible Study on January 29th! See you there!!!**

**Worship and Music:** Happy New Year! The new church year began a few weeks ago, and now we have the beginning of 2023. We will celebrate the Feast of Epiphany on January 6, the Baptism of our Lord on January 8 and the season of Epiphany will continue into February. Epiphany is the church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi as the first appearance of Christ to the Gentiles. Sages from the east journey for miles under the guidance of the heavenly star and bow before Jesus, presenting him with the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**Mission and Ministry:** A new year brings new opportunities! We have access to so much help from Thrivent with their grant cards. Let’s see how we can make the most of them. All ideas are welcome!

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**January 4th – Erik Benway**

**January 9th – Junior Erickson**

**January 18th – Charles Patterson**

**JANUARY CALENDAR**

**Sunday – January 8th – Executive Council**

**Sunday – January 15th – Council**

**Saturday – January 28th – Clean Up Day – 9:00 AM**

 **Jan. 1 Jan. 8 Jan. 15 Jan. 22 Jan. 29**

**Altar Guild** Tammy Wayne Junior Carolyn Tammy

**Usher** Wayne Junior Carolyn Wayne Junior

**Lector** Wayne Lynne Junior Chuck Gabi

**Sermon** Pastor Pastor Pastor Pr Smith Pastor

**Thrive** Gabi Pastor Gabi Pastor Wayne

**Oaks**  Chuck Chuck Chuck

**WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Education for Lutheran Children”**

Ole Oleson lived with his wife Bergit, two sons, and three daughters near Lake Johanna in Pope County, Minnesota, in 1880. The three girls were enrolled in public school. Gottlib Schmidt lived with his wife Threasa, and their six children in New Ulm in 1895; their children were in school too, but probably in a parochial school.

Four and a half million immigrants came from Germany or the countries that constituted Germany in the last half of the nineteenth century, and nearly one and a half million immigrants came from the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Finland in the same time frame. The 392 Ole Olesons and the 6,432 Schmidts in Minnesota in the late nineteenth century had choices in where they sent their children. Those choices were there partly because of the cultural background they brought and partly because of the speed with which they integrated into their new country.

The Germans tended to include Lutheran elementary schools when they started a parish; the Scandinavians were less likely to do so. The oldest Lutheran church in North America, in New York City, established a Lutheran school in 1752. In 2007-2008 (National Center for Educational Statistics) the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) had 1,200 schools with 138,000 students, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) had 344 schools with 30,000 students, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) had 180 schools with 14,000 students. Although it is somewhat of a generalization, LCMS and the WELS grew out of the German immigration and the ELCA grew out of the Scandinavian immigration. Although WELS and LCMS have less than half the membership of the ELCA, they have the great majority of elementary and secondary schools.

As Norman Madson noted in an anniversary booklet, both the Scandinavians and the Germans emigrated from countries in which the state provided a Lutheran education. When they came to the U.S., they were confronted with a public school which did not include religious instruction and where the teaching was in English. The Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes had less difficulty accepting public education at the elementary level and were less insistent on preserving their mother tongue. They also tended to come with skills and occupations which required a quick assimilation into the existing culture, including language and associations. Georg Sverdrup (1848-1907), a Norwegian theologian, also contended that the state, not the church, was responsible for education, and churches should not use their money to do the work of the state. The Scandinavians thus tended to establish colleges which would provide Christian training for young people, both to move into the American society and to be Christian teachers in public schools. That became the basis for the great Lutheran colleges in the Midwest.

The Germans, on the other hand, for complex reasons wanted to preserve the language that Luther used and they wanted to raise their children in a German culture. The early theologians of the LCMS, WELS, and, later, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), such as Walther, Hoenecke, and Madson believed that Lutheran schools were essential, not merely for language and cultural preservation, but also that the Bible could be read and studied and taught by teachers who were trained by the Lutheran church for Lutheran elementary schools. The battles at the beginning of the twentieth century over the Bennett Law and in legal attempts to restrict or close parochial schools strengthened the resolve of the WELS, LCMS, and ELS to preserve their schools so the next generation could also contend for the faith. The LCMS, WELS, and ELS thus established colleges to train teachers for their own schools.

From the 1920s onward, culture and language became less relevant as a reason for Lutheran parochial schools, and Lutheran schools became "Americanized." Public schools became more professional and had access to financial resources that private schools did not. The boom years after World War II dramatically increased the enrollments in Lutheran schools. Today, Lutheran schools face declining enrollments which mirror declines in birth rates and in the number of church-going Lutherans. Schools also face the expense of maintaining buildings, keeping current with technology, and meeting the new emphasis on effectiveness and accountability. Other non-public schools, such as the Catholics, face similar challenges. On the positive side, there is a growing interest in early childhood education which goes across all the Lutheran church bodies. Early childhood education has become important in evangelism and in meeting a need for today's families. Today, eleven percent of all children in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve in the United States attend a nonpublic school. Schools such as Lutheran schools provide a necessary choice for parents, and they provide a means by which a church can assist parents in the most important part of a child's education.

Numbers and statistics, however, cannot encompass or fully explain what a Lutheran school did in the past or does today. For that you really need a story: It was a warm March day. Winter was over-maybe. The two classrooms in the Lutheran school were filled with children, quiet and busy. In the upper grade room the teacher was reading Evangeline to the students. The girls would cry when Gabriel died; the boys toughed it out. Across the playground, the church bells rang. Then the middle bell began tolling. 1, 2, 3-someone had died79,80,81. Someone really old had died. Toward the end of the school day, the pastor handed the teacher/organist the hymn numbers and the hymn the family wanted the children to sing-"Asleep in Jesus"-again. On the day of the funeral, the boys brought along slacks, dress shirt, and a tie. The girls wore their dresses. Before the funeral at 2:00 (only Catholics had funerals in the morning), the boys changed and the upper grades were marched over to church, down the center aisle, around the open coffin, and upstairs to the balcony. The teacher/organist/sexton played, the pastor preached, and the children sang.

When all the people left the church for the cemetery, the children were marched back to school, quietly, No recess was scheduled in the afternoon because friends and family returned to the church for the Leichenschmous. But at the end of the school day, the ladies aid brought the left-over cake from the funeral meal for the children. It was a good day. Several weeks later, the teacher/organist/sexton/principal announced that the school had received a memorial gift from the family, and the children should decide where it would be spent. The children decided on an unabridged dictionary-the boys lost out on the baseball and bat because the girls sided with the teacher/organist/sexton/principal/janitor who had the last word anyway. A month later the dictionary arrived and was neatly inscribed: A gift of the Volksmanner family in memory of Gertrude Elizabeth Anna Volksmanner (1860 -1941). The dictionary would be used by her great-great-grandson when he enrolled the following year. First grader Mary Ann Leitner also announced that she had a new baby sister.

Life, death, and continuity-those were the lessons taught by the community of Lutheran church and Lutheran school to each generation. Perhaps it was insular, perhaps parochial. But the school and the church remain with those children. **“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”**