



THE LION OF ST. MARK'S

JANUARY 2012

I Am the New Year

I am the new year. I am an unspoiled page in your book of time.

I am your next chance at the art of living.

I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the last twelve months.

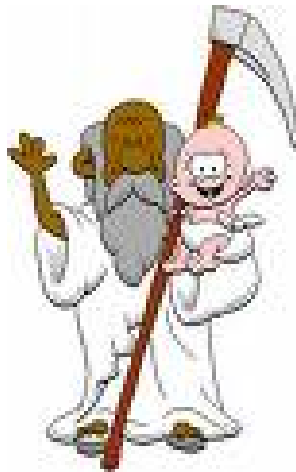
All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me,
waiting for you to search it but with more determination.

All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve
is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will,
all the faith that you claimed but did not have—these slumber lightly,
waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance to Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

*May God
bless you
in 2012!*



*May 2012 be
the year you
bless God!*

New Year's Message

"I asked the New Year for some message sweet, Some rule of life with which to guide my feet;
I asked, and paused: it answered soft and low, 'God's will to know.'

'Will knowledge then suffice, New Year?' Aloud I cried. And, ere the question into silence died,
The answer came, 'Nay, but remember, too God's will to do.'

Once more I asked, 'Is there no more to tell?' And once again the answer sweetly fell,
'Yes! this thing, all other things above, God's will to love.'"

New Year's Prayer

"Heavenly Father, for this coming year Just one request I bring.

I do not pray for happiness or any earthly thing.

I do not ask to understand the way you lead me;

But this I ask—teach me to do the thing that pleases You.

I want to know Your guiding voice, To walk with you each day.

Heavenly Father, Make me swift to hear and ready to obey;

And thus the year I now begin a happy year will be,

If I am seeking just to do The thing that pleases You."

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Council Notes

The Council met in regular session on November 21, 2011 in the Crossways Room. The Council:

- ◆ received the reports of the pastor, officers, and committees.
- ◆ received the proposed budget for 2012 from the Finance Committee and adopted it for presentation to the congregation.
- ◆ called a special congregational assembly for Sunday, December 11, 2011, following each of the worship services, for the purpose of acting on the budget. If there are no amendments made at the 10:30 service, the process is concluded; if there are amendments, balloting resumes on December 18 following the 8:30 service for their concurrence.
- ◆ planned a special Advent/Christmas meal for Council members and staff on December 19 in Fellowship Hall.
- ◆ concluded the meeting with Prayer of the Close of the Day in the chapel, led by Dan Zeigler.

Parish Register

- ◆ Holy Baptism for Jonathan Lynch was celebrated on All Saints Sunday, November 6, 2011.
- ◆ Holy Baptism for Dalton Nash was celebrated on Christ the King Sunday, November 20, 2011.
- ◆ First Holy Communion for Dalton Nash and Sean Jensen was celebrated on Christ the King Sunday, November 20, 2011.
- ◆ Holy Bibles were given to Sean Jensen and Ashton Ott on Christ the King Sunday, November 20, 2011.
- ◆ Pastor Elkin officiated at the graveside funeral for Josephine Coleman in Twin Hill Cemetery on November 23, 2011 on behalf of Pr. Frontz of Messiah Church.

Staff & Officers Contact Information

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Ken Shafranko, Treasurer	322-6005
Mel Wentzel, Director, <i>The Way</i>	327-8286
Kathy Eshelman, Stephen Ministry	433-0522



Please return your Advent Wreath parts to Bernadette as soon as possible. Thanks!

KNOTTERS NEEDED!!!

Check out the outstanding quilt on display in the front entrance of the Parish House. Crafted by Lucille Weaver, next year it will be on its way to a family in distress.



Our Quilting Group has been busy each Wednesday, but newcomers are needed. Several of our knotters have been sidelined due to illness. We invite you to join us any Wednesday morning at 9:15 a.m. (or later if more convenient).

You do not need to know how to sew. If you can tie a knot we want you! You will need to bring a pair of scissors to snip the threads.

We enjoy working together to create items that are both useful and beautiful. Join us when you can for a pleasant morning of fellowship with a purpose.

Family Promise Hosting Update

Our most recent week of hosting homeless children and their families concluded December 18, 2011.



We provided shelter, food and hospitality to three families totaling eleven people. Jane Zimmerer, Becky Miller Pryor and Larue Dieter wish to thank the many volunteers who made our hosting possible. From the set-up crew to van drivers to folks who donated cakes and cookies to the many folks who prepared meals or ran the dishwasher, to folks who provided evening visiting or stayed overnight and got the coffee brewing in the morning, to those who came back and cleaned up and washed sheets, towels and blankets, thank you, thank you, thank you for a job very well done. The families repeatedly expressed their gratitude.

A special thank you is due to the Parish Life Committee for their assistance with meals, the Girl Scouts under the leadership of Jennifer Robertson for preparing Saturday's hearty breakfast, and to Todd Smith for tutoring a boy in secondary mathematics.

An added bonus to our hosting is the addition of folks from First Presbyterian who will serve as a support congregation for Family Promise. These folks have expressed a desire to partner with us during hosting weeks. Pastor Sam Hwang and his young son Justice, Evelyn Landis and Ann and Victor Recchi contributed greatly to the success of our week.

Our next hosting week is March 25, 2012 through April 1, 2012.

As you reflect on our Savior's ultimate sacrifice for us,
how might you serve others in a Christ-like manner?

Home Bible Study Beginning!

When God's Gift Comes Specially Wrapped

This Bible study was developed by Charles R. Swindoll for parents or grandparents with special needs children.

Beginning January 7th

**5:00 – 6:30pm at the Comini home
336 Bennett St. Montoursville**

Bring your kids and your Bible with you.

Materials will be provided.

In Christ's love ~ Eric & Sharon



*"Every child has been divinely formed to be a unique creation of the Father,
and God makes no mistakes"*

MILESTONE MINISTRY



Passing on Faith: Remembrance Service

The Remembrance Service was held on the fourth day of Christmas, the day of the holy innocents, martyrs, the day in the church year when we remember the grief of the parents in Bethlehem. The committee, headed by Michele Owen, arranged for grieving persons to light a candle in memory of their beloved and to receive a keepsake ornament crafted by Mr. John Burkholder.

Passing on Faith: Remembrance of Baptism

Breanna Chicas, daughter of Mae Thaljih and Ozzie Chicas, was baptized this past year at the Easter Vigil, followed by Breanna Bower, daughter of Tanya Sheets & John Bower in August. J.D. Lynch, son of Brittany and Joshua Lynch, was baptized on Sunday, November 6. And, on Christ the King Sunday, November 20, Dalton Nash, son of Nykeana Nash and sponsored by Kirk and Michele Owen, was baptized at the 10:30 service. On January 8, we remember their baptisms and present them with their Faith Chests.

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL



Our teachers for January are:

Pre-K and K:	Sharon Comini
1st and 2nd:	Brenda Gair
3rd and 4th:	Joyce Hershberger
5th:	Eric Comini

Thank you for volunteering! Teachers are still needed for several months this year. Please call michele to volunteer.

GLORY

God Loves Our Rockin' Youth!

Join us if you want to rock!

HOME BIBLE STUDY
WITH FUN GAMES & SNACKS
SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st
4-6 PM

at the **COMINI'S**,
 336 Bennett Street, Montoursville
 971-5434/651-9062



United Churches of Lycoming County

ECUMENICAL LUNCHES

Wednesdays, 12 to 1 PM

A tasty \$6 lunch, warm, ecumenical fellowship & a thoughtful program designed to enrich your life mentally, physically, spiritually and socially at Pine Street United Methodist Church.

No reservations are necessary.

- 4 - Rev. Gwen Bernstine, Executive Director, United Churches, *"Living Fully in 2012"*
- 11- Rev. David Fishel, BBC, Chaplain, Susquehanna Health System, *"Near Death Experiences"*
- 18 and 25 - Rev. Dr. John Piper, Retired United Methodist Pastor, and Rev. Dr. John Charnock, Supervisor, Susquehanna Health System *"Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Understanding War in an Age of Terrorism and Unity in an Age of Radical Diversity"*
Make plans to join us and you're welcome to bring a friend!



24 hour Devotion Line

is available to encourage you in your relationship with God. Devotions are under three minutes and change weekly. Call 570-322-5762.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS

Specific requests were not listed this month.

Donations are received Monday mornings from 9:30 - Noon. Appointments to receive food are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 am - 3 pm and when necessary at other times as well. Gail Burkhart is the UCLC Food Pantry Coordinator and may be reached at 322-1657.

YOUTH & FAMILY



in Pittsburgh, PA, Friday-Sunday, January 27-29, 2012

Pre-trip meeting and Bible study for chaperones and students is on Sunday evening, **January 8, 2012**, at Messiah Lutheran in South Williamsport.

- 5:00 PM: *Chaperone meeting*
Youth prepare dinner with assistance from Pr. Elkin
- 6:00 PM: *Dinner*

Group meeting and Bible study follows dinner. All final details and rules regarding the trip will be discussed at this time and final payments made.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT EVERYONE ATTENDS!
Look for a letter regarding the meeting to arrive soon!

WRAP-UP BIBLE STUDY AND MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, FROM 3:00-4:30.

Go Green for Gifting.....Next Year

Becky Miller Pryor is requesting donations of holiday gift bags in all sizes. These gently used bags will be recycled with new tissue paper next year when we gift the ladies at the Selinsgrove Center and the residents of Danville State Hospital. Donations may be placed in the tub in the Narthex.



ALL CHURCH FRIDAY FUN NIGHT

FRIDAY, JAN.20 AT 6:30 PM
**FOR THE BEST TIME YOU'VE
YET TO HAVE!**

News in Our Pews

It seems only yesterday that I jokingly remarked that soon we would be wrapping Christmas presents and here we are – it must be age that time just goes by so quickly.

The passage of a year certainly figures into the performance of “Plaid Tidings” at the Community Theater League – last year as they prepared for the production **Nick Buckman**- one of the show's lead actors- suffered a ruptured appendix and the show was forced to cancel. This year Nick and the show are back in force and the production ran December 9 and 10 and 15 through 17 with a matinee December 18. Nick has really enjoyed doing the show and has wanted to be a part of it since he saw a performance some years ago. We will continue to follow Nick's illustrious career on stage as time goes on.

This is the season of Christmas concerts and it was a pleasure to attend the Williamsport's Chamber Choir's performance of the Vivaldi “Gloria” and see our own **Taylor** and **Sadie Wentzel** as a part of the youth choir. It was a special evening. **Emily Newcomer, Sara Jones, Riley Weber, Katelyn Lauer, Corey Hospes** and **Max Hospes** participated in the WAHS Christmas concert in December.

Emily's brother, **James**, was named to the honor roll at Curtin Middle School as was **Ben Haussmann**. At the Williamsport Area High School **Riley Weber** was named to the high honor roll. Lots of high achievers in our young people!

Thanksgiving is a highlight of the year at the Little Lambs Preschool – the newspaper had several photographs of the children learning the story, cooking some of the foods and playing games of the period. We have had this preschool as a part of St. Mark's for many years now and it has been a great addition to the church.

Some of our talented musicians entertained at a fundraising luncheon for the youth group – some played music and others served, making it a special time!

As we enter this most holy time in the church year, I wish for you all a most blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

~ Joyce S. Hershberger

Please submit items to Joyce via her email deermountain2@comcast.net or by calling her at 322-0410.

St. Mark's Elves

The weather outside was frightful but once again St. Mark's Elves provided everything necessary to bring Christmas joy to the ladies of CM-6 at the Selinsgrove Center. Your donations of body wash, pudding, slipper socks and money made it possible for us to gift the ladies and their caregivers in ways most appreciated.

Special thanks go to Pastor Elkin, Jackie and Shirley Kinney and Lou DeSeau for making the trip.

The congregation's generosity also extended to twenty residents of the Danville State Hospital. We provided socks, watches, wallets, and underwear helping to provide Christmas cheer to residents without families. This chairperson thanks Pastor Roy Meyer for delivering our gifts along with those of Redeemer Lutheran Church.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH



CHILDREN'S CHURCH next meets Sunday, January 8, at 10:30, in the chapel. Children's monetary donations this month go toward our milestone ministry on this anniversary of the Baptism of our Lord. See you in the chapel on January 8!

SUPER SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY!

We are on a mission to fight hunger and poverty. You can help.

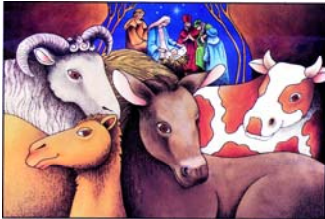


“Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat”

More than 15 years ago on a Super Bowl Sunday, a single youth group was inspired by a simple prayer. They started the Souper Bowl of Caring, a youth-led movement that is now an international event. Since 1990, the Souper Bowl of Caring has raised more than \$33 million for individual charities across the country. It is also turning our nation's biggest weekend of football into its largest weekend of giving. Each year, tens of thousands of our nation's youth put God's love into action through the Souper Bowl of Caring. You can help them feel the significance of caring for others. Drop a dollar in the soup pots that will be in the narthex on January 29 and February 5 as you leave worship. Your donation will go directly to a charity right here in our community. With your help, more dollars will be raised, more lives will be changed, and more young people will experience the joy of serving Christ by serving others.



Simple Gifts



We had a wonderful time preparing our Christmas gift of song and story for you!!

The children and youth involved were: Sara Jones, Sean Jensen, Sadie Wentzel, Ben Haussmann, Annika Waffenschmidt, Amalie Robertson, Anna Zeigler, Owen Gair, Hannah Haussmann, Taylor Wentzel, Abby Robertson, Laura Zeigler, Levi Gair, Elizabeth Haussmann, and Brie Gregory.

The adults were: Ruth Burkholder, Pam Jensen, Jenn Robertson, Vicki Haussmann, Andrea Gregory, Brenda Gair, Donna Elkin, Diana Zeigler, Chele Fredericks, Declan Jones, Bud Doebl, Nick Buckman and Bob Jones. Bernadette and Jungwha wish to thank everyone for their support and encouragement! Happy New Year!!

Daniel's Closet

December's distribution saw more than two hundred people choosing clothes, taking a new or gently used toy for a son or daughter, enjoying a snack or getting free flu shots from the Pennsylvania Department of Health. At the end of the day the cupboards were bare.

As you put new Christmas clothes into your closet, please consider donating good used clothing to Daniel's Closet. The greatest needs are for children's clothing from infant to teens, men's clothing in all sizes and women's plus size clothing. Warm coats, hats, gloves and sturdy shoes and boots are also needed.

Donations can be made during weekday mornings. Please call Redeemer Lutheran Church at 322-2333 to be sure the building will be opened. Speak with Becky Miller Pryor for additional information.

CAMP MOUNT LUTHER



CAMP MOUNT LUTHER

and the

Upper Susquehanna Synod Youth Council

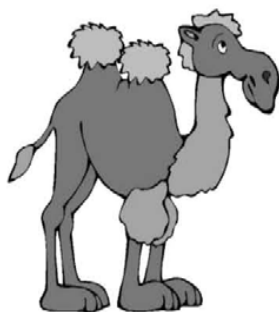
Present

[FLOOD SU](#)

Camp Mount Luther and the Upper Susquehanna Synod Youth Council present *FLOOD SU: Friends Living Out Our Discipleship at Susquehanna University*. This annual event will be held on Saturday, January 14, 2012, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at the Field House at Susquehanna University. Doors open at 3:45 p.m. The event is open to youth in grades 4 through 12. FLOOD SU features a praise band, service project, swimming, open gym, racquetball, hot dogs, snacks, Rock Band, and Guitar Hero. Each youth group should bring a reasonable amount of snacks to share, clothes for swimming, a loud voice to sing God's praises, hands to do God's work, games, and sports equipment. We'll provide service project materials, hot dogs and drinks, basketballs, volleyballs, Rock Band and Guitar Hero! Cost is \$5 if registered by Tuesday, January 3, 2012; \$10 at the door, with free admission for adult chaperones. It is requested that adult chaperones have their PA State Police Criminal Background and Childline Child Abuse Clearances. Each congregation should provide one adult (21 or over) for every seven youth.



[Annual Camperson Event at Mount Luther](#)



This event gives participants the chance to find out what's going on at camp and tell the story to others! It will be held on Sunday, January 22, 2012, at 3:00 p.m. at the Evergreen Center at Mount Luther. Each congregation in the Upper Susquehanna Synod is asked to send a representative to the event. Campersons serve as liaisons between the camp and the congregation, promoting outdoor ministries. Each congregation who sends a camperson to this meeting will receive \$15 off each of their church's camper registrations. For more information on being a camperson, please visit www.campmountluther.org.

[Synod Youth Retreat](#)

Camp Mount Luther and the Upper Susquehanna Synod Youth Council present "I Believe, Help My Unbelief: The Creeds of the Church," this year's synod youth retreat. The retreat is for youth in grades 6-12 and will be held on Friday, February 3, 2012- Saturday, February 4, 2012, at Camp Mount Luther. Come and grow in your faith as you learn more about the creeds of the Church. Cost is \$45 (*St. Mark's will pay 1/2 of cost*) if you register before January 17. A late fee of \$5 is added after that date. There is a firm registration deadline of January 27, 2012, with no refunds after that deadline. Each registered group should provide one adult (21 or over) for every seven youth and at least one adult for each gender represented. Cabin assignments will be made based on available adults and number of youth attending. Any questions or concerns can be addressed to Rev. Patrick L. Sipes at 570-539-2341 or sgtmuddy@gmail.com.



Christmas Activity Reports



Advent Wreath-making

About thirty people attended the meal marking the first Sunday of Advent. We all sat down to a delicious lunch of soup and grilled cheese sandwiches after the 10:30 service.

The making of the wreaths followed. Ten wreaths were put together by folks ranging from small children to children-at-heart. Creativity abounded in the use of holly, pine, spruce and hemlock; ribbon and berry sprigs; small ornaments and, of course, candles.

Kids' Morning Out

The event was cancelled this year, due to many of our children and youth assistants' involvement in basketball (three games that morning!) After discussing it with some of the parents, a change is being made: next year, we hope to see all of our children and teens at **Kids' NIGHT Out!!**



Cookie Baking



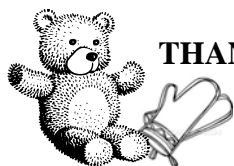
Another huge "THANK YOU" goes out to Jackie, Chele, Donna, Devin Michele and the ladies from Corning (Ninette, Nancy, Sara, and friends) for their able assistance at 12:30 on that Saturday with the cookie baking. Cookies flying EVERYWHERE!! It was great! We produced hundreds and hundreds of cookies for the carolers to deliver that Sunday and to share among ourselves.

A wonderful assortment of goodies was assembled during this afternoon: pizelles; chocolate chip, double chocolate, sugar, ricotta, and oatmeal cookies; and more!

Do try to join us next year when we move to an early morning start, in order to be finished for Kids' Night Out. THANK YOU!!!

Caroling

Four groups totaling 24 carolers visited as many of our homebound as they could on the afternoon of December 12. Any we missed on that day were visited later by Pr. Elkin. It's wonderful to visit those members of our church family whom we don't see on a regular basis. We are always made to feel so welcome. Can we see more of you with us next year?



THANK YOU to everyone who contributed on the trees in Fellowship Hall!! Many children in the area will be the recipients of your generosity in the giving of 42 teddy bears for comfort and 78 mittens, scarves and hats for warmth. Thank you!

ACOLYTE TRAINING

An acolyte training and refresher session is scheduled for Sunday, January 22, 2012, after the second service.

This meeting takes precedence over any other meetings, practices, or classes.

All current and prospective acolytes are expected to attend.

Lunch will be served and the Acolyte Memory Game will be played.



13th Annual Catechetical Retreat



Catechetical Retreat 2011 is scheduled for January 7, 2012, at Messiah Lutheran. Topics of discovery include:

We Dig to Learn ~ Pr. Kenneth Elkin, St. Mark's ~ What was life and worship like in a Jewish community in the time of Jesus? In teams of two persons, we're going to excavate a scale model of the town at Wadi Hamam in the Galilee, and see what we can learn about both the process and the result of archaeological digs, and how it can help us better understand the New Testament stories of Jesus.

Life in Liberia ~ Pr. Ron Shellhamer, St. Matthew & Ms. Sandy Nelson, St. Michael ~ Both leaders have spent extensive time in Liberia and want to share their enthusiasm for and experiences in the Liberian mission field. They will introduce life in the "developing world," giving teens a chance to explore another culture and ask questions about that and the challenges facing citizens and visitors .

What's in a Name? ~ Pr. Sarah Hershberger, St. Luke ~ Like music? Can't be convinced to be separated from your iPod? This is the one session to which you are encouraged to bring your MP3 players, iPods, and yes, maybe even cell phones! We'll talk about the music you're listening to, the products you're buying, and how we were convinced to buy them in the first place. Consider bringing a printout of the lyrics of your current favorite song. Or maybe you know them by heart, so all you'll need is your brain...and your ears...but leave the earbuds at home: in this session, we all get to listen to what you're listening!

Resident Alien? ~ Pr. Detlef Huckfeldt, St. Michael ~ We will explore the life of an alien and reflect on both a) the fact that we sometimes feel like aliens in a foreign world and b) God's commandment to welcome the aliens among us. (*You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.* ~ Exodus 23:9)

Parents, Teens & Money ~ Mr. Keith Wood, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans ~ How do advertising, peer pressure, and other influences affect your attitude toward money? Can faith and values offer guidance? It is important to balance what teens share, save, and spend as they gear up for financial independence in the future.

Remember to ask our catechetical students how they enjoyed their day!



FOR TEENS ONLY!

January 23rd, at 6:00 pm

Bring a friend!!

Spread the word!! Hope to see you there!!

United Campus Ministry

By the time you read this newsletter, the students at Penn College will be home for Christmas break. The students at Penn College have had a very busy month getting ready for finals. United Campus Ministry participated in the Giving Tree that was held on campus to benefit children in the area. We used our bake sale money to buy Christmas gifts for two children. We had a great time shopping for them and we were happy to help out. We also participated in the annual Christmas card activity that was open to all student organizations. Students and advisors were busy painting 4x8 boards with their Christmas message. United Campus Ministry's message was a simple one, but very powerful. The board read,

"This Christmas, receive the best gift of all...JESUS."

On the board was painted half of a pine tree in the snow and the other half of the tree was the cross. It had a small gift box on the cross filled with scriptures declaring the Good News of Jesus. Students were able to take a scripture verse with them. It was our way to let Christ's love shine at Penn College this holiday season. All of the Christmas cards were displayed on campus with a special lighting ceremony led by Penn College's President.

A special thank you goes out to those individuals who helped put together study bags for our students. Thanks so much to St. John Lutheran Church in Jersey Shore for preparing so many study bags. We were blessed with so many bags, that we were able to not only pass them out to the college students, but we were able to give some bags to the children at the Center in town. Overall, 150 study bags were given away to students. They were filled with snacks and prayers. It was a fun way to feed the body as well as the soul this season.

We are sad to say goodbye to two of our students who will be graduating on December 17th. Victoria Frick will be getting her associate degree in Social Work. She has worked with Family Promise and other organizations during her time at Penn College. Joe Sewalk will be getting a certificate for Culinary Arts. He has completed his internship with Le Jeune Chef. Congratulations to both of you.

Be looking for more information about our annual soup sale event. That is one of our main fundraisers for UCM. Any congregations or individuals who would like to make soup for this event may contact me.

May the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of our Savior, be in your hearts and minds, and may the Lord richly bless you and your families in 2012.

In His Service,
Sharon Comini, Coordinator UCM

Thoughts on the New Year

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other. ~ Author Unknown

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in.

A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves. ~ Bill Vaughan

Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right. ~ Oprah Winfrey

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year.

It is that we should have a new soul. ~ G.K. Chesterton

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves.

The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day. ~ Edith Lovejoy Pierce

Health, Healing & Wholeness

If as Herod, we fill our lives with things, and again with things; if we consider ourselves so unimportant that we must fill every moment of our lives with action, when will we have time to make the long, slow journey across the desert, as did the Magi? Or sit and watch the stars as did the shepherds? Or brood over the coming of the child as did Mary? For each one of us there is a desert to travel; a star to discover, and a being within ourselves to bring to life.

-Michael Podesta-

For many, there is nothing quite as beautiful as the absolute silence of a winter snowfall. The world looks as though God has taken a flour sifter, and gently tapped the snow through, allowing it to kiss the surfaces of trees and shrubs. For those of us who live in urban and suburban areas, there is usually a small window of opportunity in which to enjoy this sacred time, for soon enough, the air will be filled with the sounds of snow plows, as they dredge through God's frosting to once again expose the dark ground. Unearthing these paths allows us to resume our lives of work, school, activities and busyness. For those in rural areas, the reprieve perhaps lasts a bit longer.

We are entering the liturgical season of epiphany –the awakening to the light of the presence of the Christ come to earth. It was the time when the wise men slowly made their way across barren land to pay their homage to the new king they had heard whispers about. Herod had tried to detain them, to beg them to do his bidding by revealing the location of an infant who could threaten his seat of power. Were they wise because of their vast knowledge of the world, or because they would not allow themselves to be pawns in Herod's paranoia, and his quest for complete supremacy? The journey was slow, with little to distract their minds from anything but what lie ahead. To our lives today, what a gift, that silence could bring!

Elijah also knew the power of silence. God told him, *"Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."* Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake,, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire **a sound of sheer silence...then** there came a voice to him that said, *"What are you doing here, Elijah? He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."* Then the Lord said to him, *"Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus."* And God rolled out a plan for Elijah to anoint a new king.

Yes, it is January. We've just heralded in a new year. We've survived the well- intentioned noise and hustle of the holidays, made resolutions, and perhaps already broken them. I would like to suggest that perhaps January first is not the time to chart our course for the coming year. Amidst all the noise, have we really listened to what God is calling us to do? The psalmist says, *"my soul in silence waits"*. For some of us, the sheer silence of a winter snow may offer us the opportunity to hear what God is proposing. For those who do not experience snow, it may mean carving out some time to be alone; listening.

Here is a short exercise to help you open yourself to God. While sitting, take a break from whatever you're doing, and check your body for tension. Relax your facial muscles and allow your jaw to fall open slightly. Loosen your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Let your shoulders drop. Let your arms fall to your sides. Allow your hands to loosen so that there are spaces between your fingers. Uncross your legs or ankles. Feel your thighs sink into your chair, letting your legs fall comfortably apart. Feel your shins and calves become heavier and your feet grow roots into the floor. Now breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly. Each time you breathe out, try to relax even more. Allow a simple phrase, such as *"My soul in silence waits,"* to drift through your mind as you relax. Maintain this quiet for as long as you can. What is God saying in the silence?

Through these stops with God, we learn that life isn't about what we are doing or becoming. It's embracing what is, instead of resisting it, and opening ourselves to God's whispers of love and peace now and on the journey ahead.

*A Blessed New Year to All!
Debbie Best*

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

01/01 Shelby Weber
 01/02 Cecil Calvert
 01/02 Ashley Ciesielski
 01/02 Jeremy Hinds
 01/03 Katherine Crane
 01/03 Charlotte Hughes
 01/04 Gregory Calvert
 01/04 James Newcomer Sr.
 01/06 Mary Lou Doebler
 01/08 Shirley Dieffenbach
 01/10 Susan Baker
 01/10 Andrew Zeigler
 01/10 Peter Zeigler
 01/10 Toby Zimmerman
 01/11 Suzanne Hutchins
 01/12 Owen Elliott
 01/12 Grace Elliott
 01/12 Kathy Kolb

01/13 Jackie Kinney
 01/14 Riley Weber
 01/16 Lee Doane
 01/17 Donna Boston
 01/17 Nathan Kimble



01/17 Ruth Lamade
 01/17 Beth Miller
 01/17 Ruth Rees
 01/19 Morgan Comini
 01/21 Herbert Poff
 01/22 Elizabeth Ruesskamp

01/23 Christina MacGill
 01/23 Tara Thorne
 01/25 Walter Doebler
 01/26 Bonnie Eyer
 01/26 David Heaps
 01/26 Marc Kinney
 01/26 Robert Smith
 01/27 Ruth Burkholder
 01/27 Dustin Kimble
 01/27 Phyllis Ulman
 01/27 Cassandra Wellen
 01/28 Sean Buckman
 01/28 Kristopher Caster
 01/29 Zachary Jarrett
 01/30 Linda DeSeau
 01/30 Devin Owen
 01/30 Travis Thorne
 01/31 Kathleen Caster

Happy Anniversary!



01/20 Arthur & June Decker
 01/23 Chuck & Ruth Homan

Lunch n' Fellowship

Please join us for a Ravioli Extravaganza!
Wednesday, January 18th at Noon
Please bring a side dish & dessert to share!

Lay Ministry Institute

The Lay Ministry Institute is visiting the West Branch Conference on Sundays, January 15, 29 and February 12, 2:30-4:30pm at St. Michael's, Quiggleville.

Under the leadership of Pastor Melody Sell of Washingtonville, the subject will be THE FIRST 1000 YEARS OF THE CHURCH. Topics covered will include heroes and heretics; the development of the creeds and liturgy; how civilization was saved by a solar eclipse; strange and unusual historical events. This will be a highly interactive class.

The cost of each class session is \$5. Please register with your home congregation or Rev. Melody Sell (e mail prmsell@verizon.net or 437- 2652)

ST. MARK'S JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1 Sunday

Name of Jesus

New Years Day

8:00 AM Holy Communion
9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Holy Communion

2 Monday

Catechetical Retreat Snow Date

Office Closed

3 Tuesday

8:00 AM City Pastors
9:00 AM Morning Prayer

4 Wednesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:20 AM Staff Mtg & Quilting
1:00 PM Staff Luncheon

5 Thursday

6:31 AM Men's Ministry
9:00 AM Morning Prayer
7:00 PM Senior Choir

6 Friday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer

7 Saturday

9:00 AM Catechetical Retreat @ Messiah

8 Sunday

Baptism of Our Lord

8:00 AM Holy Communion
9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Faith Chest Milestone & Reception
10:30 AM Children's Church
10:30 AM Holy Communion
11:45 AM Family Handbells
12:15 PM The Way Gathering
5:00 PM Youth Quake/Zone Dinner Mtg.
@ Messiah

9 Monday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
5:45 PM JBBL-Beg PW Practice
6:30 PM JBBL PW Practice
6:45 PM Handbells
7:00 PM Wmspt. Civic Chorus
7:15 PM JBBL Midgets Practice

10 Tuesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
6:00 PM Brownies

11 Wednesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:20 AM Staff Mtg & Quilting
11:45 AM Bible Study

12 Thursday

6:31 AM Men's Ministry
9:00 AM Morning Prayer
6:00 PM Exec. Committee
6:30 PM Mutual Ministry
7:00 PM Senior Choir

13 Friday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer

14 Saturday

Catechetical Retreat Snow Date

15 Sunday

Epiphany II

8:00 AM Holy Communion
9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Holy Communion
11:45 AM Family Handbells
6:00 PM Catechetics meal/mtg

16 Monday

Office Closed

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
5:45 PM JBBL-Beg PW Practice
6:00 PM Dog Club Banquet
6:30 PM Council Mtg.
6:30 PM JBBL PW Practice
6:45 PM Handbells
7:00 PM Wmspt. Civic Chorus
7:15 PM JBBL Midgets Practice

17 Tuesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
12:00 PM LSM @ COS

18 Wednesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:20 AM Staff Mtg & Quilting
10:00 AM Women's Mtg/Middle Lounge
12:00 PM Lunch N' Fellowship

19 Thursday

6:31 AM Men's Ministry
9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:20 AM Stephen Ministers
7:00 PM Senior Choir

20 Friday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
6:30 PM Friday Fun Night

21 Saturday

12:00 PM Relay for Life Event
6:00 PM Dog Club Banquet

22 Sunday

Epiphany III

8:00 AM Holy Communion
9:15 AM Sunday School

22 Sunday

10:30 AM Holy Communion
11:45 AM Acolyte Training
11:45 AM Family Handbells
12:15 PM The Way Gathering
2:00 PM Civic Chorus Board Mtg.
6:00 PM Teen Movie Night

23 Monday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
5:45 PM JBBL-Beg PW Practice
6:30 PM JBBL PW Practice
6:45 PM Handbells
7:00 PM Wmspt. Civic Chorus
7:15 PM JBBL Midgets Practice

24 Tuesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
6:00 PM Brownies

25 Wednesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:20 AM Staff Mtg & Quilting
11:45 AM Bible Study
7:00 PM Worship & Music Mtg.

26 Thursday

6:31 AM Men's Ministry
9:00 AM Morning Prayer
7:00 PM Senior Choir

27 Friday

Youth Encounter QuakeZone Retreat
9:00 AM Morning Prayer
9:15 AM Lion Crew

28 Saturday

Youth Encounter QuakeZone Retreat
8:30 AM Daniel's Closet @ Redeemer

29 Sunday

Epiphany IV

Youth Encounter QuakeZone Retreat
8:00 AM Holy Communion
9:15 AM Sunday School
10:30 AM Holy Communion
11:45 AM Family Handbells

30 Monday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer
5:45 PM JBBL-Beg PW Practice
6:30 PM JBBL PW Practice
6:45 PM Handbells
7:00 PM Wmspt. Civic Chorus
7:15 PM JBBL Midgets Practice

31 Tuesday

9:00 AM Morning Prayer

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Blessings for the New Year

I choose to initiate God's promises and blessings for my life in the New Year 2012 by declaring them as true. He is the "God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17, NIV). The power in a blessing is in speaking it! Because I believe that God has more wonderful things planned for me than I can even imagine (Ephesians 3:20) for the coming year, today I declare that:

- I am blessed with*** God's divine purpose and perfect plan for my life.
- I am blessed with*** gifts, God-given abilities and guidance.
- I am blessed with*** strength of character, self-determination and self-control.
- I am blessed with*** family and friends, faith and freedom.
- I am blessed with*** health, happiness, favor and fulfillment.
- I am blessed with*** promotion, protection, prosperity and provision.
- I am blessed with*** spirit of obedience, supernatural success and a positive outlook on life.
- I am blessed with*** a fresh start and a new outlook on life, beginning today.

I am looking forward to the new thing God will do in my life this year.
I choose to let go of the past and get excited about my future because I am blessed!
In Jesus' name, Amen