

# BETHEL NOTES

## Baptism of Our Lord

### Serving This Sunday

**Accompanist:** Mary Seim

**Lay Assistant:** Sue Hesse

**Usher(s):** Terry and John Korpela

**Projectionist:** Vann Arvanetes

**Counters:** Jody Arvanetes and TBD

### Readings

**Isaiah 42:1-9**

**Psalms 29**

**Acts 10:34-43**

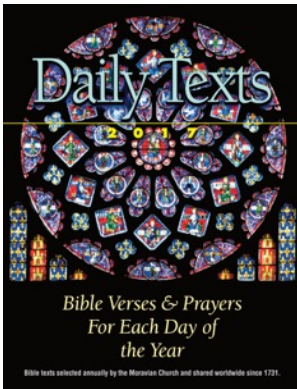
**Matthew 3:13-17**



In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

Source: Sunday's and Seasons, Augsburg Fortress, 2017 Year A





## 2017 Daily Texts

The 2017 Daily Texts: Bible Verses and Prayers for each day of the year are available (No charge to you !) If you wish to take more than one, there is a suggested donation of \$6. If you wish to write a check, make it payable to Bethel and footnote Daily Text in the memo line.

## 2017 FLBC Summer Camp

The 2017 FBLC Summer Camp brochures are now available in the Narthex. If you have never been to camp, you don't know what fun you are missing. Pick up one of these brochures now to book your dates.



Calling all volunteers! Family Promise has a great opportunity for you. They will be holding a volunteer orientation on Tuesday, January 10, at 7pm at Holy Spirit Catholic Church. This is a time to invite your friends and a part of this ministry! They may not know if you don't tell them!

## BUDGET FORUM: This Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, after worship in the Sanctuary.

It has become a planned and repeated opportunity each January, for the Bethel Council (with the help of the Budget Task Force) to offer a budget forum. What is a budget forum ? It is a time when the congregation will receive their "first look" at the 2017 Bethel Budget or as some would refer to it as the Ministry Funding Plan. This Sunday after worship (10:45am) Bethel Treasurer, Dave Scholten, will present the 2017 Budget in the sanctuary. All are invited to come, listen to the presentation, ask questions, and offer input. Your input will be received and shared by/with the Church Council which meets this coming Tuesday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30pm and will finalize the 2017 Budget which will be voted on at the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. If you are unable to make the budget forum this Sunday and would like the information presented, please let Treasurer, Dave Scholten, know and/ or any Church Council member.





# PASTOR STEVE'S MESSAGE

## “The Best We Have to Offer”

Epiphany. It is a word which comes from the Greek *epiphaneia*, **manifestation**, from *epiphainesthai*, **to appear** : *epi-*, forth + *phainein*, *phan-*, **to show**. Today, January 6<sup>th</sup>, is the Epiphany of Our Lord. We read in the gospel assigned for this day of celebration the story of the *magi* who were guided by the star to the place of Jesus' birth. They came asking, “*Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews...for we have come to pay him homage.*” *Matthew 2: 1-2*

These magi, or wisemen have also been described as magicians, Persian priests and astrologers. Whoever they actually are or were, they risked a long and perilous journey from the East to the Christ child. And when they arrived at the place of this little king's birthplace, “*...they were overwhelmed with joy..and they knelt down and paid him homage (another way of saying they worshipped the Christ) and they opened their treasure chests and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.*” *Matthew 2: 10,11*. In ancient days these gifts were one's befitting of a king and represented the best of what they had to offer - all offered as *homage...worship* of this “*child born king of the Jews.*”

Each of us, like the magi, are called and guided to come before the King of Kings to worship him. Not by a star but by the Spirit of the living God. As the great reformer, Dr. Martin Luther, states in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, from this Small Catechism, “*the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith,...*”

We come before Jesus, our Lord and Savior, with the treasure boxes of our lives filled with every good and precious gift from above. The best of what God has gives to us. Wealth, skills, abilities, and love – all offered up in service to our Lord and King of Kings. As I have witnessed at Bethel, you - God's people, have offered generously your many gifts for God's work ! Reaching out to those in need, locally and globally. I encourage you to come to worship the King of Kings this Sunday and make time to after worship to learn about Bethel's 2017 Ministry Funding Plan (or Church Budget). Your input and support are vital to shaping the ministry we share, in Christ's name.

Each time we come into our Savior's presence may we, like the magi, be filled with joy and moved to freely open the treasure chest of our lives and offer to Christ and his purposes all the best we have been given. To God be the glory !





## Words From the Bishop

### “Living as Neighbors”

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"In the long history of Christianity there exists no more tragic development than the treatment accorded the Jewish people on the part of Christian believers."

In 1995, and again in 2015, the Montana Synod entered into an agreement with the Montana Association of Jewish communities, pledging to learn to understand one another better, and to support one another as we seek to be God's people in this world. We pledged to be, among other things, good neighbors.

During the last several weeks, some of our Jewish neighbors have experienced prejudice and intimidation, based on their being Jewish. Whitefish has been a focal point, but targeting of Jews for harassment has taken place in other places as well. This is not acceptable.

Many people have responded with support for the Jewish community. Churches have posted a "Montana Menorah" in their windows during Hanukkah, as a sign of solidarity. Human rights groups have made statements. And city governments have voted to stand against white supremacy and hate.

This is not the first time that Montana has seen anti-Semitism. In the 1990's, someone threw a brick through the window of a Billings home with a Menorah in it, and the community responded with putting pictures of Menorahs in hundreds of windows. The effort was led by Margie MacDonald, director of the Montana Association of Churches, and the ecumenical and interfaith response to "Not in Our Town" was strong. In response, the Montana Synod entered into dialogue with the Montana Association of Jewish Communities and forged an agreement of mutual respect and dialogue.

It was around the same time that the ELCA adopted a Declaration to the Jewish Community, repudiating the anti-Jewish statements of Martin Luther, many of which have been used to justify violence and prejudice, including the Holocaust. As a denomination, and as a Synod, we have gone on record against anti-Semitism in all forms. I encourage congregations to read and study the Montana Synod Agreement and the ELCA Declaration and be in conversation with Jewish neighbors, seeking common goals and working together. One congregation, Bethel Lutheran in Great Falls, has been the home to the local Jewish community for over a decade.

I conclude with a quote from the 1994 ELCA Declaration to the Jewish Community:

"Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred, moreover, we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people.



January 6, 2017

We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such bigotry, both within our own circles and in the society around us. Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed One upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community."

You can find links to:

[Agreement between Montana Synod ELCA and MAJCO](#)

[Declaration of ELCA to Jewish Community](#)

Jessica Crist, Bishop



Save the Date:

# Comfort Food Classic

Benefitting:

Saturday, Feb. 11, 2017– 5:00-8:00 PM

Moose Lodge

401 21<sup>st</sup>, Black Eagle, MT

Tickets: \$25/single, \$5/children (3-12yrs)

Family Promise volunteers, recruit your Cook-off team to create your “Comfort Food” Main Dishes for everyone to taste and have a chance to win the coveted People’s Choice Award. Make your booth memorable by decorating it, by wearing costumes - whatever suits your fancy!

Everyone is invited to bring their most delicious dessert to enter in the Dessert Contest. Individual dessert servings will be sold, with a prize for the creator of the most sold. And that’s not all! You will have a chance to bid on Valentine’s Day themed silent auction items.

Most of all, this casual, family friendly fun event will raise funds for

Family Promise of Great Falls.

