

St. John's Lutheran Church

NEWSLETTER

Volume 118, Issue 1

January, 2019

“White As Snow”

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” – *Isaiah 1:18*

One of the joys of New England winters for my family is watching the snow delicately come down. After serving in south Arkansas for twenty years, I seldom saw any snow during the winter months. Living in western Massachusetts, I have observed a certain beauty in this white substance. After the snow has stopped falling, it glistens off the sunlight/moonlight and looks like a collection of valuable gems waiting to be placed into a very expensive crown. It looks so pure and clean as it floats down from the heavens to the earth. The type of snow that I like to shovel resembles powdered sugar – fluffy and lightweight.

In the opening chapter of his book, the prophet Isaiah had taken the nation of Israel to task. He had spoken honestly to a people and a nation, complaining that the people had rebelled against God and that the spiritual children He had lovingly nourished were no longer eager to serve Him. Isaiah had drawn a comparison between the people of Israel and their God and animals and their owners. In chapter 1, verse 3, he writes “*The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.*”

The prophet Isaiah speaks to the people in a serious manner. He says they are a sinful nation and a people burdened with sin. He reminds them of the fact that they have forsaken the Lord and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. Isaiah complains that the entire nation of Israel is full of wounds and bruises and oozing sores. There is not a

single spot on the body of Israel that does not have some sign of sickness and disease.

God came to His people then and comes to His people today with a wonderful invitation extended by the prophet. He urges us not only to reason together and repent, but to reason together for our own comfort and reassurance in order to receive the wonderful blessings we have in the promises of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Isaiah had preached repentance. He had urged the people to turn and invited them to return to God. He had given them the greatest comfort on earth. When they repented, acknowledged their wretchedness, turned back to God, became as wise as the ox and the other farm animals, and received God's richest blessings, then God Himself would wash all their sins away. What was scarlet in transgression and red in iniquity, God would make as white as snow (purity) and as clean as cleansed wool, which is ready to be made into a fine garment.

When we have trouble in our soul and in our heart, and our whole body feels discouraged, here come the wonderful, refreshing words of the prophet Isaiah: “*Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*” When we are without comfort and experience turmoil, we are reminded of the words written in Romans, Chapter 15: “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*” When we are in distress, we hear the words of Psalm 46: “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.*”

Then we look to Mount Calvary

and we see the holy, innocent Son of God hanging on the cross. We see the suffering Jesus forsaken even by His own Father. We hear His anguishing cry: “*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*” We see Him a little while later, knowing that everything has been accomplished, and saying “It is finished!” What a great blessing we have in our Lord Jesus Christ! What a great blessing we have in our Savior Jesus Christ, the One Who saves and cleanses our souls!

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Lord of the past, present, and future, forgive us our sins of this day and this past year. Do not hold our offenses against us, but show us Your abundant mercy. Enable us through the power of Your Spirit to lead holy lives according to Your commandments. Cleanse us of our failings each day through the blessings of our Baptism. Give us a thirst for hearing, reading, and learning Your Word. By regularly receiving our Savior Jesus Christ's true Body and true Blood, prepare us for life in the new year of 2019 as Your redeemed and holy people. Now and in the new year, O Lord, be with us. Amen.

Make Me to be as White as Snow,
Pastor Riley

LUTHERAN WITNESS

Subscriptions for the Lutheran Witness, a publication of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, are \$11.00 per year. To renew or enter a new subscription, please use the SUBSCRIPTION envelope in your box of 2019 offering envelopes. These envelopes may be placed in the offering plate or given to Jane McClure.



Very Much!

Thank you to everyone in the congregation whose hard work and talents made the Christmas Season here at St. John's wonderful.

Special thanks to Jeff Windoloski, who spent hours practicing, planning and coordinating music for the services, and working with the choir. Also thank you to the hand chime choir, senior choir, and Soloists for their gifts of sharing the beautiful music for the Savior's Birth.

Also, we, the staff members of St. John's wish to express our personal thanks to the congregation for their Christmas Gifts which were presented to each of us on Christmas Day. Your thoughtfulness and kindness is greatly appreciated.

Have a Blessed New Year!

*Pastor Riley, Jeff Windoloski,
Jane McClure, & Lisa Sinkowski*

A Note of Thanks

My family and I wish to thank everyone who presented us with gifts, sent cards and exchanged greetings during the Christmas season. Your love and thoughtfulness are truly appreciated. We enjoy living in Western Mass and serving all of you. "I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus" - 1 Corinthians 1:4.



Love in Christ,

Pastor, Vicki, and Shannon Riley



VOLUNTEERS are needed to help take down our Christmas decorations on Saturday, January 12th, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Many hands make for light work!

WinGS: Women in God's Service



The women have been very busy the last month. The *Meaning of the Advent Wreath* Candlelight Dinner was beautiful and a meaningful way to begin the Advent season as we waited for the Celebration of the Birth of Our Savior. Thank you to all who made the Advent dinner such a success with the decorating, cooking, narrating the story, and cleaning up afterwards.

A Christmas tree with all the decorations was donated and delivered to the Forum House. This donation was greatly appreciated by the members.

Thank you to all of the ladies who spent the time to help clean and decorate the church for Christmas. The church looked beautiful.

We will be taking down the decorations on Saturday, January 12, starting at 10:00 a.m.

The next WinGS meeting will be on January 19 at noon follow by a luncheon in Room 8. We will have a representative from Dress for Success explain their program. If you have clean, gently used "business casual" clothing that you would like to donate for this cause, please come to the meeting or drop it off at the church. Remember, any woman who is a member of St. John's is also a member of WinGS.

COFFEE HOUR HOSTS

are needed throughout the 2018 year. If you would like to host, all that one needs to do is bake, bring in juice, serve and clean-up. There is a sign-up sheet located in the church foyer or speak to Erika or Linda Slozak if you are willing to volunteer. A sign-up sheet is located on the Coffee hour table.



OUR NEXT CONCERT: "LESSONS & CAROLS"



FEATURING SCHOLA NOVA
*Saturday The 5th Of January 2019
At 7:00PM*

Join us for the second concert in this season with a choral concert by local choral ensemble Schola Nova! Schola Nova begins its 36th concert season with the tradition of the Lessons and Carols, begun in the 19th Century at King's College, Cambridge, and now performed by choirs all over the world. The concert employs nine texts read by members of St. John's complemented by music from Benjamin Britten's well-known "A Ceremony of Carols," as well as carols sung with the audience.

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of January & February:



- January 6- open
- January 13- Sienkiewicz (1)
- January 20 - open
- January 27- Sienkiewicz (1)
- February 3- Kousch Fund (2)
- February 10- McClure (1)
- February 17 - Sienkiewicz (1)
- February 24 - Sienkiewicz (1)

If you would like to sign up in the 2019 FLOWER BOOK located on the round table in the church foyer. We can do up to three bouquets per Sunday. The cost per bouquet is \$21.00. Checks are to be made payable to St. John's Flower Fund.

Volunteers are needed to care for the altar during the upcoming months in 2019. This past year, we were short of help. Please consider offering your time to help our church with this activity. If you cannot do a full month, two weeks will be fine.



This activity doesn't take a lot of time and is very easy to do. Men, women, and teens are welcome. Training will be provided for those who are interested. For questions, contact Jane (562-0492).



Super Bowl Grinders

It is that time of year again when the fans will enjoy the Super Bowl on Sunday, February 3rd. What a great day to have a grinder and/or purchase one for a lunch during the week. Please support the youth group. We will be taking grinder orders from January 13-27 at church or you may call Jane at 562-0492 to place an order. Each grinder is \$6.00, same as last year, with choices of meatball, roast beef, ham, turkey, or Italian.



Radio Broadcast

A NEW SIGN-UP SHEET HAS BEEN POSTED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OFFICE

Please help in the continuing outreach mission project of our Radio Broadcast of Sunday morning Worship. Broadcasts can be heard each Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WHYN (560 AM). The cost for the program is \$125 per week. If you are interested in sponsoring a broadcast (or a part of a broadcast) in memory of or in honor of anyone please call the church or sign up on the sheet outside the office door. Donations of any amount are welcome. Additionally, we have posted previous weeks' broadcasts on our website along with the associated bulletin.

Let us know if there is a shut-in or someone who missed a week, and we will email a link so they can hear the whole service. Just log onto <http://stjohnswestfield.org>; links to the broadcasts and the weekly bulletins are on the main page.

Please see/call Bill Schneeloch (860-604-5264) or e-mail at radio@stjohnswestfield.org with any questions.

MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

We will resume our mid-week Bible study of Mark's Gospel on Tuesday, January 8th. We meet in the Lounge at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Choose which time is convenient for you and join us!! To engage regularly in Bible study would be an excellent New Year's resolution.



"And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"

2 Timothy 3:15-16



Our dollar-for-dollar matching offer was exceeded beyond the \$3,000.00 goal. THANKS BE TO GOD! But, help is still needed. The storms have passed and now we know what is needed most to aid these folks. Please send your gifts to: Orphan Grain Train c/o LCMS 400 Wilbraham Rd Springfield, MA 01109. Checks should be made payable to OGT-New England Branch.

We have regular quarterly business meetings. Our meetings are open and welcome to all. Please contact Bill Schneeloch if you would like to carpool. He will be leaving St John's parking lot at 8:30 a.m. Please keep OGT in your prayers.

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RESTORATION UPDATE:

Every week before worship we hear an update and most of us have already seen the new work as we enter the sanctuary. But, let's think back to how things looked a few months ago, say July. There were water stains on the ceiling and down the brick-work. Pans, buckets, and barrels in the foyer to contain rain water that had dripped from the ceiling above. Floor tiles were loose and lifted up. Our church entry didn't look as welcoming as we would have liked.

Very soon, the foyer will have a fresh coat of paint on the new ceiling, some additional lights, and a newly tiled floor which will cover the whole hallway down to the north stairway. Work also continues downstairs replacing the tile in the entryway leading to the fellowship hall.

2019 CHURCH COUNCIL & ELDERS

President—Bill Schneeloch
 Vice-President—Tom McClure
 Secretary—Jane McClure
 Treasurer—James Love
 Financial Secretary—Doris Love
 Trustees—Mark Baldyga, Rudy Musterait and Gary Wolfe
 Elders—Paul Brose, Bill Schneeloch, Bill Wigham, Gary Wolfe, Rich Conroy, & Dan Provost

All Council Members and Elders will be installed during the worship service on January 13th.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

We would like to thank Susan Owen for all of her hard work with the children in making our Christmas Program a success. The children were great telling the wonderful story of Jesus' Birth!

Sunday School resumes on January 6. We ask that you remember to keep our Sunday School in your prayers.

With Thanksgiving

The world is full of heartache. Heartaches of all kinds: financial difficulties, health problems, broken relationships, job stresses. You can name more. Look around you, and often you can see hurt in people's eyes. More often, we learn to mask our hurt and present a "happy face." The apostle Paul had plenty of heartaches, too. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, without a home of his own, in danger from the elements, from enemies, and, sadly, in danger from false brothers. He suffered from hunger, the cold, and lack of clothing. He felt the pressure of concern for the

new churches he established and served. (2 Corinthians 11:16-33.)

Surely Paul had a right to complain, not just to those who brought these calamities upon him, but to God Who allowed them! So we might think, anyway. Not so! Paul boasted in his weakness, in the circumstances over which he had no control, for he knew God was in control. "That is why," Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, in insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Paul taught the new Christians to depend on God for all their needs:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). That two-word phrase in the middle is easy to miss: "with thanksgiving." And why should we not pray with thanksgiving, knowing we have a gracious God Who delights to bless us! Why should we not pray with thanksgiving, knowing we have a God Who has spared not even His own Son (Romans 8:32)! Should we lose all, we still pray with thanksgiving that nothing can separate us from our Savior.