

## Your Past Does Not Define Your Future

New Year's is a celebration of the past and the future. We take stock of the past with thanksgiving and sometimes even relief (that it's over), and we look to the future in hope and anticipation, and perhaps with some worry, for what it holds.

The point is that New Year's celebrations remind us of who we are as opposed to who we would like to be, what we have done in comparison to what we want to do. It reminds us of our accomplishments, but mostly it reminds us of our failures. What we've lost. Who we've lost.

New Year's is our own version of Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*. And we all play Scrooge. We are visited by the ghosts of our pasts, presents and futures.

St. Paul writes: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" (2 Cor. 9:6–15).

St. Paul tells us that the Lord will both supply and increase what we need to give to the church for its work in the world. He tells us that this work God does in us will enrich and bless us in every way, and through this, will produce thanksgiving to God. With this in mind, here is some practical advice to help you take stock of your giving in years past and change what needs to be adjusted, improved, or done away with altogether.

First, attend the Divine Service to receive God's gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. If you've not been faithful in attending worship to hear the preaching of God's Word, to receive forgiveness and feast on the rich food of our Lord's body and blood for the eternal benefit of your body and soul, then repent and come to receive the gifts God freely gives. God doesn't want your money. He wants you — all of you (Matt. 22:20–22).

Second, pray for the Lord's help. Your right as a Christian is to speak with your Father, the King of all creation, freely through His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Go to the throne of grace and ask for strength and wisdom to follow His bidding faithfully (John 15:1–16).

## Your Past Does Not Define Your Future (Continued)

Third, consider what the church is and what the church does. The church is a place of mercy. It inhales the mercy of the Father by the death, resurrection and ascension of His Son through the preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It exhales this mercy in love toward neighbors. You are a member of the church, of God's family. Thus, you are not only a recipient of God's mercy, but a bearer of that mercy for the life of the world. You spread that mercy through the generous giving of your income to support the work of the church in the world, as the Israelites did in the Old Testament (Lev. 27:1–34).

Fourth, take stock of your current giving in light of the New Testament's teaching on supporting the work of the church. Are you giving of your first fruits, taking it out of your paycheck first, or does God get what's left over? Are you giving voluntarily and cheerfully? Are you giving proportionally and generously? The Old Testament required a tithe, or ten percent. The New Testament gives freedom to be generous, to give more for the Church's work. Are you relying on God's promise to provide and increase what you need to do His work? If your answer is no to any of these, repent. If God gave you His only Son, will He not provide for you all things, even physical things? Trust Him, His Word, and heed it.

So, don't let your past define your future. Rather, commit for the year a generous proportion of your income, which is God's gift to you for this body and life.

– LCMS Stewardship Ministry: [lcms.org/stewardship](https://lcms.org/stewardship)

"Please join us for Bunco Night on Friday, January 13 at 6:00. " Light snacks will be served so please bring a snack to share.



Thank you to all of the Sunday school parents, grandparents, family, friends, and caregivers, Pastors, Shirley Cook for accompanying, and especially to the STUDENTS for a wonderful Christmas program and great year so far! We look forward to seeing you for the first day of Sunday School on January 8, 2023. Merry Christmas and happy new year! Glory to God in the highest!

-Shepherd of the Valley Sunday school staff

# Happy Birthday!

Kristina H	1/4
Jacob F	1/8
Sherrald K	1/11
Steph I	1/15
Don G	1/19
Shaylee I	1/20
Luella R	1/20
Alice G	1/21
Corrin F	1/21
Angie V	1/22
Cindy B	1/24
Joshua L	1/26
Larry W	1/26
Kallen H	1/28
Bruce K	1/29



Doris W	1-12
Leona M	1-13
Dwight C	1-19
Patrick R	1-20
Kristina H	1-29



Joel & Brittne W 1-05

Jan 1	Keaton H.	900am
Jan 8	David A. Olivia D.	815am 1045am
Jan 15	Shaylee C. Jensen H.	815am 1045am
Jan 22	Gavin V. Jason C.	815am 1045am
Jan 29	Hudson H. Abby Z.	815am 1045am



## January 2023

1-15 Craig Helm

16-31 Lee Roath



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS! Have you made some of these - perhaps related to diet and/or exercise? I'm not much of a New Year's resolutions kind of a person; but on the other hand, FRESH STARTS are one of the most important aspects of a Christian's life! Every time we REPENT of our sins, we are not only confessing that we have done something contrary to God's will, but we are also to be intentionally declaring our RESOLUTION to change our minds and actions regarding that sin! With God's forgiveness

and on-going process of our sanctification, may our 2023 be filled with resolutions that allow God's Holy Spirit to continue to "transform us by the renewing of our minds" (Romans 12:2) - in Christ! A Blessed New Year to all!

Please continue to share information about our LCMS "Main Street Living" media ministry with others. In addition to being broadcast each Sunday morning, you can view archived programs anytime at [www.mainstreetliving.com](http://www.mainstreetliving.com) - then click on the link under the picture identified as "Fargo."

Thank you for your needed financial support! Checks may be sent to "Main Street Living NORTH," 821-5th Ave S, Fargo, ND 58103, or donate by Credit Card or your PayPal account on the website. God's blessing in Christ!

-Ken Koehler / MSL North Volunteer Coordinator

### "MSL North" Programs for January 2023:

**January 1<sup>st</sup>:** Rev. Daniel Voth, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND, presents the message: "Our Exodus" based on Matthew 2:13-23. Lutheran Hour seasonal program: "The Other Wiseman" - Another Magi, making his journey to the Christ child, encounters others and shows kindness along the way.

**January 8<sup>th</sup>:** Rev. Thomas Puffe, St. John's Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, MN, and Zion Lutheran Church, Warren, MN, presents the message: "The Baptism of our Lord Jesus" based on Matthew 3:13-17. "This Is the Life" program: "Senior Citizen" - A man struggles with purpose and a place in life after retirement.

**January 15<sup>th</sup>:** Rev. Daniel Suelzle, Wittenberg Chapel, Grand Forks, ND, presents the message: "The Lamb of God" based on John 1:29-42a. "This Is the Life" program: "The Deadly Pen" - A businessman struggles with the guilt of another man's death.

**January 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Life Sunday Service / Guest Speaker. "This Is the Life program": "Live Option" - A 15-year-old pregnant daughter and her mother disagree on the future of her child.

**January 29<sup>th</sup>:** Rev. Richard Biberdorf, Grace Lutheran Church, Carrington, ND, Grace Lutheran Church, Cooperstown, ND, and Zion Lutheran Church, Rural Binford., presents the message: "When Worlds Collide" based on 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. "This Is the Life" program: "Transition"- A young boy reacts to the reality of a divorce of his parents and the new reality he now faces.

"MAIN STREET LIVING" is a locally-produced TV program that includes a 30-minute worship service led by participating pastors of the Minnesota North and North Dakota Districts of our LCMS, along with a 30-minute Lutheran Hour program (normally "This Is the Life," along with occasional church-season specials).

Programs are broadcast starting at 10:00 am Central Time Bismarck/Dickinson: KBMY Xtra Channel 17.3 Midcontinent Channel 594 MSLN programs are also archived for one year and can be viewed at any time on [www.mainstreetliving.com](http://www.mainstreetliving.com) then click on "(Fargo)".

# “Tell the Good News about Jesus” convocation on February 10th and 11th in 2023

Have you ever wanted to reach out to others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ but did not? Have you ever wanted to encourage family members with the Good News of salvation by grace through faith, but struggled with how to accomplish it? Have you been concerned about the future of your loved ones concerning eternal life? Have you been concerned about the future of your congregation or the church throughout the world? Do you want others to share the joy and peace of God’s grace and mercy in His Son, Jesus Christ? If your answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” join us for the “Tell the Good News about Jesus” convocation on February 10 and 11, 2023, at the Ramada Inn in Bismarck, North Dakota!

Our theme for the conference is Psalm 51 and the Joy of our Salvation. We will begin at 1:00 pm on Friday, February 10th, with worship and opening remarks. Planned for that day are speakers:

- Rev. Zelwyn Heide, Hannover and New Salem, ND – History of outreach and word and Sacrament ministry in ND.
- Rev. Dr. Christian Preus, Casper, WY – The concerns of modern education with regard to the Christian Faith.
- Rev. Jon Walla, Bismarck, ND – Faith instruction in the Lutheran Home.
- Rev. Dennis Voss, Mandan, ND – Supporting the proclamation of the Gospel through whole-life stewardship.
- District Leadership presenting recent and current evangelism efforts in our North Dakota District.

An evening meal will be provided a 7:00 pm, followed by entertainment by Milo Hatzenbuhler.

Day Two speakers will include:

- Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, LCMS Mid-South District president – “Generation to Generation”; a study and strategy for retaining our members, children, and others in faith and active discipleship. Dr. Paavola will be our keynote speaker.
- Rev. Dr. Heath Trampe, Minot, ND – two sessions about Rural Ministry and Outreach.
- Rev. Dr. Christian Preus, Casper, WY – The classical model in higher education. In particular, he will discuss opportunities at Luther Classical College which will open in Casper, WY.
- Mrs. Denise Wolfgram, Bismarck, ND – Classical education at Martin Luther Grammar School in Bismarck, ND.

On Saturday, we will begin at 8:30 am and conclude by 4:45 pm.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year church family! This time of year many people reflect on the past year's happenings and many spend time making plans for the coming year. Maybe it's a resolution to stop eating chips (like that will last until 5:00 PM on January 1st) or finally taking the vacation you have been dreaming about. Our congregation will also be making plans for the coming year and with everyone's input, the plans will be more thoughtful and vastly more fruitful than a resolution!

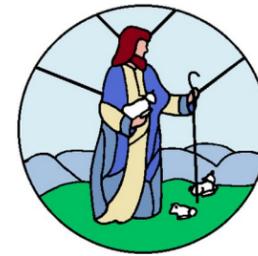
On January 22nd during the education hour, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., the Vision Path Committee will be leading the first of two planning meetings to "make long-range plans for the development and expansion of Christ's work". This is a requirement of the Bylaws of Shepherd of the Valley, Article V paragraph 2. Okay, that was a very technical, official sounding statement however it just means we need to make plans for the church on an annual basis. Plans are important in every aspect of life and without a plan, nothing happens or rather nothing happens very well and usually ends up costing us time and money! So let's make a plan!

The first planning meeting will be a facilitated discussion to hear what YOU, as a member of the congregation, believe are our church's internal Strengths and Weaknesses and its external Opportunities and Threats. This discussion is called a S.W.O.T analysis and is a big brainstorming session where everyone shares their thoughts about these four areas.

The second planning meeting will be on February 12th from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. when we turn the S.W.O.T into plans which is a rewarding process and a little exciting too! Just think about it, the work we will be doing will be expanding Christ's work! I'm not a huge football fan (please don't tell my sports-loving husband) but even I know the Super Bowl is played later that same day. This meeting will not interfere with your ability to watch the pre-pre-game, the pre-game or the actual game but in the spirit of the day, we will have pizza and snacks



# JANUARY 2023



**Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church**  
*“A church family that shares, nurtures, and lives our faith in Christ”*

January 2023, Newsletter

## Why I Am a Lutheran: Part 3 Hearing God

How does God speak to us? Much of American Christianity is confused about this issue. It is not uncommon to hear people say things like:

1. God is leading me to . . .
2. God has been speaking to me about . . .
3. I feel lead to . . .
4. I have a peace about such and such . . .so I know this is God’s will.

But in my pre-Lutheran days, the question I always had was: How do you know that God has spoken to you? Feeling peace about something is a very tenuous criteria for knowing God’s will or what God is saying. Emotions and feelings are very subjective, and while they do play a part in the Christian life, it is perilous to base one’s beliefs on feelings. What if two people both claim that God has spoken to them, but He has told them different things? Joseph Smith claimed that God spoke to Him. Muhammad also claimed to hear from the divine. But they believed different things. How do we know who to believe? How do we know that God has spoken?

If we should not base our beliefs on feelings, then what do we base our beliefs on? We need certainty. We need something solid and objective. The answer was there all along. The answer is scripture. God’s word does not change. It is eternal. It is all we need. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:

**<sup>16</sup> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (KJV)**

Remember in the first article in this series I mentioned two fundamental doctrines that I was taught growing up? This is the first of the two!

1. Everything we need to know about God and salvation is found in Scripture alone! Scripture is God's word and is 100% accurate in what it teaches us. The Christian needs only scripture for this Christian life (2 Tim 3:16-17).
2. Salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone. It is not based on our works or good deeds, but on His death and resurrection alone! (Eph 2:8-9)

Lutherans call this the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, or scripture alone! This is where we put our trust. This is where we find the truth. To listen for God’s voice anywhere else invites spiritual chaos and disorder, which is the devil’s playground. It is this solid reliance on scripture alone that I was taught as a kid that I found consistently practiced in Lutheranism. This is yet another reason why I am Lutheran.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor Woodside

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1 <b>9:00am:</b> New Years Day Service	2	3 <b>6:00pm:</b> Bible Study	4 <b>6:00pm:</b> Worship <b>6:00pm:</b> Catechism <b>6:00pm:</b> Hand Chimes <b>7:00pm:</b> Choir	5 <b>7:30pm:</b> Trustees	6	7 <b>8:00am:</b> Christ care <b>9:30am:</b> Take down Christmas Tree
8 <b>8:15am:</b> Divine Service <b>9:30am:</b> Education Hour <b>10:45am:</b> Divine Service	9	10 <b>4:00pm:</b> Evangelism <b>5:00pm:</b> Human Care <b>5:30pm:</b> Stewardship <b>6:00pm:</b> Bible Study	11 <b>6:00pm:</b> Worship <b>6:00pm:</b> Catechism <b>6:00pm:</b> Hand Chimes <b>7:00pm:</b> Choir	12 <b>10:00am:</b> People Matter	13 <b>6:00pm:</b> Bunco	14
15 <b>8:15am:</b> Divine Service <b>9:30am:</b> Education Hour <b>10:45am:</b> Divine Service <b>1:00pm:</b> Middle School Youth	16	17 <b>6:00pm:</b> Bible Study	18 <b>6:00pm:</b> Worship <b>6:00pm:</b> Catechism <b>6:00pm:</b> Hand Chimes <b>7:00pm:</b> Choir	19	20	21
22 <b>8:15am:</b> Divine Service <b>9:30am:</b> Education Hour <b>10:45am:</b> Divine Service <b>1:00pm:</b> Senior High Youth	23	24 <b>6:00pm:</b> Bible Study	25 <b>6:00pm:</b> Worship <b>6:00pm:</b> Catechism <b>6:00pm:</b> Hand Chimes <b>7:00pm:</b> Choir	26	27	28
29 <b>8:15am:</b> Divine Service <b>9:30am:</b> Education Hour <b>10:45am:</b> Divine Service	30	31 <b>6:00pm:</b> Bible Study				