

Grace Notes

A Festival of Light

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord
has risen upon you”

Isaiah 60:1

A long time ago, during the waning days of December, Cindy and I escorted our daughters to one of the family nights at their school. It was the *Festival of Lights*. For two hours we were shuffled from one class room to another and for a few minutes in each, we were introduced to the different festivals that are celebrated at this time of year: from Winter Solstice of the Chumash Indians to Ramadan of the Muslim community to Hanukkah of the Jewish community and Kwanza of the African-American community to Christmas of the Christian community. Its purpose was to introduce the school community, primarily the children, to the different celebrations of peoples from other cultures. Each celebration served as a light into the background and culture of the diverse population that lives in Southern California, a light that revealed a lot more of what we hold in common rather than what differentiates us.

As we walked through the rain from room to room, I began to reflect upon our own celebration of Christmas-Epiphany, a festival of Light! I wondered how much these festivals reveal about us — not only our culture and background, but how much they reveal about who we are and what we believe. As we move through these weeks do we, like John, speak of “the light that has come into the world,” and that this life was the light for all? Or like the magi, do we follow the signs to the one who is the light for the world? Or do we believe Jesus when he says that we too are light?! No one lights a candle and puts it under a bushel. You put the light on a stand to illuminate your surroundings! Or even, let your

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Special points of interest

- Briefly highlight your point of interest here.
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1983

Fear not, Zacharias. Your prayer is heard,
And John shall be your Son!
(But we are old, my wife and I.
A child? What shall be done?)

Fear not, Mary. The child you'll bear
Is called the Son of God!
(A child for me, who am unwed?
What is this path I'll trod?)

Fear not, Joseph. For Mary's child is
Conceived of God, not man!
(To marry her — is it too much?
I wonder if I can.)

Fear not, shepherds. The song we sing is
Filled with news of worth!
(The light is bright, the music
Loud. Why us? We press to earth.)

Fear not, oh you whose faith is small. I
Bring good news of joy for all!
(Rejoice? We can not. No peace prevails.
We fear to fail. We dread to fall.)

Fear not my beloved, my called, my flock.
I come to save. Fear not. Fear. Not.

Rosaline John, 1983

*For Mary's child is Conceived of God, not man! (To marry her — is it too much?
I wonder if I can.)*

Save the Date....



all anew
WOMEN OF THE ELCA
TENTH TRIENNIAL GATHERING
JULY 13-16, 2017

Are you ready for new challenges? by Eva James Yeo

IT'S A NEW YEAR! Take time to imagine how you can continue to boldly redefine women's ministry for 2016. Are you ready for the challenge? Our mission statement — "Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ" — should give you the charge you need to help all women find their place in Women of the ELCA

I want to invite you to consider how you might mobilize the next generation of girls, young adults and women of all ages to become a part of this community of women.

As you gather in your congregational units, I invite you to think about transformation and growth in a new way. Transformation can be challenging because it is part of the unknown. It is unpredictable, exciting and possibly radically different.

HAVE YOU EVALUATED YOUR MODEL FOR MISSION LATELY?

If not, discuss what has worked for your unit and what has not. Begin to redefine your unit's mission by encouraging women to participate for the first time. You might tweak what has worked and let go of what hasn't. Evaluating and assessing your model for mission can help you target areas of weakness, growth and renewal.

Personally invite all women in your congregation to be a part of your evaluation and planning for the new year. Provide a place in your discussion for young adult women to share what interests them. Hearing the voices of all women — those who participate now and those who might not know about the organization yet — may spark interests and ideas and offer a place for women to be heard and supported.

Taken from: *interchange, Leadership News From Women of the ELCA*, Winter 2016

THE TENTH TRIENNIAL GATHERING will be held July 13-16, 2017, in Minneapolis, Minn. "All Anew" is the theme. While the planning continues, think about ways in which God is calling our organization to new ventures.



Hand bell Choir for Christmas Program

Christmas Window

Bells, guitars, flutes and lutes. And this was just the instruments

Sunday, December 20th once again proved to be one of those Sundays they say you should never miss, because you never know what's going to happen. But this much is sure — when kids are involved, it's always a treat.

Once again the story of the birth of Jesus was told in song and word by the children of the Sunday school, and many others who shared their gift and love of music. Based simply around the word "Christmas", the children used each letter to engage us with meaning that many would understand — using popular words, thoughts and songs. Things that we all would understand.

And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, the kids started all over again, once again using the word "Christmas", only this time each letter representing the story as revealed in scripture. True to form, parents and grandparents both leaned in and lit up as the story of God's incarnation unfolded before us. Little voices took on authority as the word came forth. Sister helped sister, brother helped brother, young and old worked together and once again the story took on new life for a new day. Thank you to all who had a part in the retelling.

To the good people of
Grace and Mercy...

Cindy, Kj, Kari and I wish to thank all of you for this wonderful Christmas season, and the cards and gifts. You have been overly gracious to us. But mostly we want to thank you for your constant prayers and support. Pastor Inch

Happenings in church...

BOOK CLUB

Just when you thought it was safe to put your book/kindle reader/nook down, it's time to get ready for the next installment of the Book Club. January's selection is *The Invention of Wings*, Sue Monk Kidd presents a masterpiece of hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world. Join us in Tuesday, January 26th at 5:30ish pm in the Fellowship Room.

TAPPING INTO FAITH

"Who's In and Who's Out?", that is the question of the evening. In our increasingly divided and angry world, even within the church, we ask this "cosmic" question about who would be considered "in" (saved) and who is "out" (unsaved—pre-saved?), and maybe just as important for our understanding, why? Join us Friday evening, January 29th @ 7pm @ the Hermiston Tavern for good company, drink and conversation.

BENEVOLENCE FOR JANUARY

The Hermiston Warming station is dedicated to providing a safe warm place to rest for people experiencing homelessness during the coldest nights of winter. The warming station will be open on the nights that are predicted to be 32 degrees and below, provided they are fully staffed. Exceptions may be made in some cases due to extreme weather conditions. For more information visit <https://sites.google.com/warmingstation>.

Leadership Minutes

Pastor Inch opened the business meeting with prayer at 6:36 PM.

Minutes: Accepted.

See Reports submitted

Treasurers Report: submitted and accepted.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

December 6th: 10 AM service. The Bishop will be here that day. Cindy and Michelle will coordinate breakfast which will be served during the service. We have enough food coming! Michelle and Cindy coordinated a couple of items.

Festival of Trees Downtown: Discussed some of the details for set up. We will need help setting up for Sunday, December 6th and for Sunday, December 20th.

Community Christmas Dinner: We received more money than the Thanksgiving Dinner needed so it was decided we would put that toward the Christmas Dinner since sending a donation to the Community Christmas Dinner was voted on in November, 2015.

Benevolence for December is KIVA and the Community Christmas dinner.

Children's Christmas Bags: Dot asked everyone to get their 20 items to her for the bags

Prison Ministry: Rosaline reminded us that if we are going to the prison on Dec 13th we need to let her know so she can tell Pastor Jaime.

Respectfully, Michelle Hedgepeth

Exploring the 'eschaton' of life By Anna Madsen

Eschaton.

Who wouldn't hope for more opportunities to use that word on a regular basis?

Eschaton.

It comes from the Greek word meaning "the last, the furthestmost, the most extreme."

But eschaton isn't simply a garden variety "last." Nope, it has its own unique take on the notion and a distinctly different gist to the idea of it than, say, the Greek word "telos."

Telos has more of a really-sincerely-we're-not-joking take on "last."

Eschaton, on the other hand, means the fulfillment of all things: the ultimate consummation of everything.

Today is Dec. 31.

It's a day that, paradoxically, packs a bit of both telos and eschaton.

The day signifies the last day of the year, which also makes for a day of reflection, of reckoning, of review of all that transpired, of events that were welcome or not, intentional or accidental.

Not least of all, the telos of this day means all of your charitable giving must be in for tax purposes; you have to spend all the money in your HSA accounts, and your vacation days (unless you're one of the lucky ones) have to be used. It's the really-sincerely-we're-not-joking last day of 2015.

But Dec. 31 is also the pivot point for the beginning of 2016 and a shot at fulfilling some hopes and goals.

It's an eve for considering resolutions, making promises for the new year, contemplating new beginnings, and opening one's eyes to

fresh possibilities that hadn't been noticed in days, months or years past.

In Christian theology, eschatology is the study of the things that will come to pass when everything – well, passes. Talk of the eschaton has been, unfortunately, an occasion for threat and fear: Think of its spin in the "Left Behind" series. But instead, and more faithfully I believe, the eschaton can be a concept filled with hope.

We can trust that in the eschaton God's intentions will be brought together with vibrancy, clarity and completeness.

In the meantime, we are offered a moment to steward the promised eschaton into being here and now. If it's good enough for the ultimate fulfillment, it's good enough to give it a whirl in 2016.

Jürgen Moltmann, a German theologian, puts it this way: "How should we really get involved in this life, with its conflicts, pains, and disappointments, if we don't trust life more than death, and if we don't with every breath confess life, and stand up to the powers and conditions which disseminate death?"

That's eschatological thinking.

Death is real. Life is real-er.

Even though we know that our telos, not just of this year, but of our lives, is coming (eventually), how can we steward the stronger promise of eschatological life?

On this Dec. 31, 2015, we are, no doubt about it, greeting the really-sincerely-we're-not-joking telos of the year.

But as we see the whites of the eyes of 2016 staring at us, we have an opportunity to ask ourselves some questions that have far more

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Stars and Signs

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are!" Have you ever said that poem when you look up at the stars at night? There are so many stars, and some seem brighter than others. After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men from the East noticed that one star in particular stood out from all the rest. When they saw that star they believed it was a sign that a child had been born who was King of the Jews. That's what we think about during Epiphany.

"Epiphany" is a Greek word which refers to a visit made by God. The star lead the wise men to the place where baby Jesus was, and then it stopped. Stars on Epiphany remind us of the wise men's journey to pay their respects to the baby king. We celebrate Epiphany on January 6. Some people celebrate Epiphany in the same way others celebrate Christmas, because on Epiphany the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the baby Jesus. Make a big star and hang it in a window or wall that faces east on

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Open Letter by The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop

Dec. 11, 2015

Dear Muslim Sisters and Brothers,

Grace and peace to you. I am writing on behalf of many Christians in this country who wish to share a word of solidarity, love and hope with you in these difficult days.

In this season of Advent, we, your Christian neighbors, are preparing to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who commanded that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... [and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31, NRSV).

In our love for you, our Muslim neighbors, we are distressed by the ways in which you are being forced to bear the fears held by many in our nation. Therefore, we renew our commitment to find even more effective ways to protect and defend you from words and actions that assault your safety and wellbeing. We believe God calls us to resist what is divisive, discriminatory, xenophobic, racist or violent, and we want you to look to us as allies and friends.

The global refugee and migrant crisis and the acts of terror committed in this country and around
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This story, which is so important to us, has a specific place and time...Of course, this story also has no time and no place. It is now "our" story...

The Story

Christmas, December 25, 2015

"And Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7 NRSV)

This story, which is so important to us, has a specific place and time. It happens in Bethlehem of Judea, some 2000 years ago, in a time of political oppression and chaos. In those days "a decree went out from Emperor Augustus" ... and "Quirinius was governor of Syria." Context matters.

Of course, this story also has no time and no place. It is now "our" story, just as Jesus is now "our Savior" and our Lord. Pictures and manger scenes will display the Holy Mother and Child as Native American, or Asian, of Black or blond. The birth can be seen in stables and barns and tents and caves. The message here is powerful. "Jesus is for all the world," and he embraces and informs the life story of each of us in all places and all times.

Yet, this Jesus is uniquely Palestinian. He is clearly first century and born into poverty. His mother, a young Jewish girl names Miriam, has a hope and expectation that speaks to her world and her reality. There may be no room in the inn, but there is a place for him in history. Without it "incarnation" has no integrity.

I have had children of my own, and they have to be someplace, in your arms, or in the crib maybe, or perhaps at their mother's breast. Real babies, real stories and real faith are like that.

So, if this story also has "no time" and "no place" that can only be for the sake of finding it a new time and a new place. This Christmas



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Grace and Mercy Welcomes You

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and ministries.

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Visit us on Facebook at Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church

The Back Door

So much has already been said, and no doubt now that we are in the homestretch, a lot more will be said about our political process. Far be it from me to suggest how one should vote, who one should support, or what is THE correct position on any issue. But, this much I would like to say — let us be civil in our considerations. What we do in the next few months not only has an effect on we who live in the United States, it will have an effect on the entire population of this planet (as does this consideration in every other country). We are truly a global community, and as such, we need to consider not only our own concerns, but how those concerns affect others. As such, especially as part of the Christian community, it would do us well to speak well of each other but to also put the considerations of the other at the forefront. As part of the Christian community, we are called to follow and emulate our Lord who emptied himself “for the least among us”. Can we do no other in this time of political consideration?



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Festival of Lights

light so shine before others that they may see your good works *and glorify* your Father in heaven. A long time ago we escorted our daughters and wondered, when people see us, do they see a festival of Light? This is a journey that we continue to this day, a journey that we are all on.

God's blessing to you during this Epiphany season.

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Eschaton

to do with the eschaton than the telos — and questions that have a ring of resolution to them as well.

Try, for example: “What are God's eschatological promises?” “How can I, in 2016, anticipate the eschaton in my life and the broader world?”

And, of course, “How can I use the word ‘eschaton’ in as many ways as possible in 2016?”

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Stars and Signs

or around January 6. Leave the star there for the whole season of Epiphany, to remind you that God has visited you. Read Matthew 2:1-11.

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The Story

you can leave the baby Jesus in Palestine, in his own time and place, or you can pick him up so that he takes on a new incarnation in the here and now. But what I learned as a father of my own children I share with you. If you pick up the child you are now responsible for him - his life, his story, and his well being.

And that's a good thing!

Christmas blessings,

Bp. Dave Brauer-Rieke

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Open Letter

the world are challenges that demand our collective efforts and our common prayers. Therefore, we will seek to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as agents of peace, justice, understanding, welcome and reconciliation for the sake of the world that God so loves.

In this holy season, when we anticipate the light that the darkness cannot overcome (John 1:5, NRSV), we are reminded of God's gift of life abundant for all. Together with you, we are committed to building a stronger society based on the dignity of each human being, the value of diversity, the holiness of creation and the common good. We pledge our partnership and invite our local communities into continued dialogue and engagement to this end.

In peace,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton Presiding Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

JANUARY 2016

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat



3	2 Christmas 9a Worship	4 6:32a Next Text 1p Choir	5 8a Coffee 6p Leadership Team	6 Epiphany	7 9a Quilters	8	9 Baptism of our Lord
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Pastor Inch—Hermiston

10	1 Epiphany 9a Worship 10:30a Educa- tion Hour 4p Vision Grp.	11 6:32a Next Text 1p Choir	12 8a Coffee	13 10a Gather Study	14 9a Quilters	15	16
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Pastor Inch

Pastor Inch—Canon Beach, Continuing Education

17	2 Epiphany 9a Worship 10:30a Educa- tion Hour 4p Vision Grp	18 Martin Luther King, Jr. 6:32a Next Text 1p Choir	19 8a Coffee 6:30p Sunday School Mtg.	20 9:30a Foot Clinic	21 9a Quilters	22	23
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Pastor Inch—Hermiston

24	3 Epiphany 9a Worship 10:30a Educa- tion Hour 5p Prison Min.	25 6:32a Next Text 1p Choir	26 8a Coffee 5:30p Book Club	27 10a Gather Study	28 9a Quilters	29 7p Tapping Into Faith	30
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Pastor Inch—Hermiston

31	4 Epiphany 9a Worship 10:15a Annual Mtg. 4p Vision Grp.
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Pastor Inch