

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
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*Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing
within and throughout our community*



Don't Throw Out the Box!

Matthew 18:1-5 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me..."

Luke 18:15-17 ⁵ Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

"Don't throw out that box!" came an impassioned cry only a few minutes after some of my favorite little people were done opening their gifts. Perhaps this same thing has happened at one of your own family gatherings. Children tear wildly into the packages, excited to see what they have to offer. Sometimes they express squeals of joy or thanks over the gifts inside. They may even play for awhile with some of the items they have been given. However, the younger they are, the quicker and more often they seem to go straight for the box! In fact, I can't tell you how many times I have heard someone say, "considering how much pleasure and time they spend with the box, maybe next time, I'll just get them that." I'm still waiting for the parent who figures this out early and does just that!

This picture brought a couple things to mind. For starters, I think that we Christians get excited every so often to tear into Jesus to see what gifts He has to offer. (Holidays often being one of those times). Some of the gifts, like peace and joy we like and are thankful for. Other gifts that involve things that are less flashy, involve things we are less interested in, or that make us uncomfortable, we tend to try to move on from quickly, like an ugly sweater. Either way, it may not be long before many gifts and where they came from tend to be forgotten or ignored. While we don't want to waste the gifts God gives us, in this metaphor I am more concerned about the one in whom all good gifts are found. What if like a child, we appreciated the gifts, but at the end of the day, we were even more interested in engaging with the box so to speak. What if we, in a creative, joyful, and wonderful way, were eager to abide in the Lord just as He does in us. What if the very suggestion of someone trying to take our favorite companion would elicit shouts of, "don't throw that out!" Fortunately, unlike the cardboard box, our Lord is not going to wear out or go anywhere! Our Lord is right here and eager for us to engage Him with the faith of a child.

If you are looking for a New Year's resolution, why not try this one. No matter how old you are, try spending some time with the Lord like a child. If you need to, break out some crayons or just sit in a box and talk to God. After all, it's hard to take yourself too seriously or not come before God with a little bit of a child - like attitude when you are sitting in a box. If anyone asks what you are doing you can tell them your pastor told you to do it, or tell them why the box is the best part. Depending on the size of the box you could even invite them to join you!

If sitting in boxes isn't your thing or you are afraid you might not be able to get up again if you did, I would encourage you to pick one or more of the following childlike behaviors and focus on it for the next few months: openness about emotions and feelings, creativity and imagination, wonder and awe, joy, playfulness and humor, trust, boundless exuberance and energy, a forgiving heart, being willing to learn and grow, or any number of other Godly attitudes and behaviors we see in children. Whatever you choose, remember it's not so much about the blessing, attitude, or behavior, as it is about the one with whom you are sharing it. May God bless you and your child-like abiding in God this new year.

In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schoeck



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Karen Martinsen	January 3
Jon Dunlap	January 13
Shirley Knutson	January 13
Ken Kehe	January 15

If we have missed someone's birthday, please let us know. Call the office at 462-7684 or email office@faithmemorial.net.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

For their winter service project, the Sunday School children will be collecting for the Porter County Animal Shelter.

If you would like to help, or for more information about their project, please see Sherri Nord or Jackie Allwardt.



FAITH'S PRAYER TEAM

Each week, the prayer team includes the families of Faith and the VCA in our prayers. If you have specific prayer requests, there are several ways to contact the team. Jan Dixon may be reached through the church office (219) 462-7684. Please leave a message for her if no one is in the office to answer the phone. You may also email her at jdixon7572@gmail.com.

You may also leave prayer requests through a link at the church website: www.faitnvalpo.org. If you would like to receive weekly prayers, contact Jan via email.

We invite you to join us under the cross between Sunday service and Sunday School.



CANCELLATION OF SERVICES DUE TO SEVERE WEATHER

We have been lucky here in NW Indiana this winter—the cold and snow so far has missed us. But since it **is** Indiana and weather can change at any minute, here is the church policy:

In the event church services are cancelled due to severe weather, an email will be sent to everyone who has signed up for our email list. If you are not on the list and would like to be, send your email address to

office@faithmemorial.net. Notifications of closing will also be on two radio stations: Indiana 105.5fm and the Z-107.1fm.



A Christmas Elf must have been taking pictures at our VCA Children's Christmas Program on December 16.

THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

New Year's Resolutions

The Gospel of Matthew reads that he was a just man. But other than that word, we know very little about Joseph, the husband of Mary, and step-father to Jesus. There are several stories where he is one of the key characters and his vocation is that of carpenter. But little else is shared and we never read any words that come from his mouth.

We first meet him as he learns that his fiancé is pregnant and not by him. As he considers how to deal gently and graciously with Mary, an angel comes to him in a dream. He is told to still continue with the marriage and that the baby boy is the result of the Holy Spirit?! Joseph listens and does what is asked.

The baby is growing, as babies do. Not quite two years old. Again Joseph has a dream. The angel warns him that King Herod is seeking to kill this child. Joseph awakes, gets Mary and Jesus, packs necessities, and escapes in the middle of the night. They are to seek refuge in Egypt. Joseph listens and does what is asked.

Herod dies. An angel comes again in a dream. All is safe now for Joseph and family to return to Bethlehem. Joseph listens and does what is asked.

But as they return home, Joseph hears that one of Herod's sons is now ruling the territory where home is located. And once again, an angel comes. Go back to Nazareth. Raise Jesus there. Joseph listens and does what is asked.

It is the New Year and often a time for New Year's resolutions. We know of an elderly neighbor who wouldn't mind a home cooked meal and some company. A co-worker is raising a child alone and could use a listening ear. The clerk at the store looks exhausted and could just use a compliment on a job well done. All are in need of us and there are many others like them.

Could we listen to the nudging from the Spirit and do what is asked?

THE SEASON OF EPIPHANY



This year's season of Epiphany will be one of the longest we have seen in years—two months (from Epiphany, January 6 but celebrated here on January 2, to Ash Wednesday on March 2..) Church workers and staff like this because it gives us some breathing room between Advent and Lent! Did you know.....

Epiphany, also called **Feast of the Epiphany**, **Theophany**, or **Three Kings' Day**, (from Greek *epiphaneia*, "manifestation"), Christian holiday commemorating the first [manifestation](#) of [Jesus Christ](#) to the Gentiles, represented by the [Magi](#), and the manifestation of his divinity, as it occurred at his [baptism](#) in the [Jordan River](#) and at his first miracle, at Cana in [Galilee](#). [Epiphany](#) is one of the three principal and oldest [festival](#) days of the Christian church (the other two are [Easter](#) and [Christmas](#)). [Roman Catholics](#), [Lutherans](#), [Anglicans](#), and other Western churches observe the feast on January 6, while some [Eastern Orthodox](#) churches celebrate Epiphany on January 19, since their Christmas Eve falls on January 6.

The festival originated in the [Eastern church](#), where it at first included a commemoration of [Christ's birth](#). In [Rome](#), by 354 Christ's birth was being celebrated on December 25, and later in the 4th century the church in Rome began celebrating Epiphany on January 6. In the Western church the festival primarily [commemorates](#) the visit by the Magi to the infant Jesus, which is seen as evidence that Christ, the Jewish [Messiah](#), came also for the salvation of Gentiles. In the East it primarily commemorates the baptism of Jesus and celebrates the revelation that the [incarnate](#) Christ was both fully God and fully man. In the West the evening preceding Epiphany is called [Twelfth Night](#). The time between December 25 and January 6 is known as the [Twelve Days of Christmas](#). Epiphany is celebrated with special pastries in many countries, and children often receive small gifts in their shoes in honour of the Magi's gifts to the infant Jesus. The holiday also has a number of traditions involving water as a reflection of Jesus' baptism, including the blessing of houses with [holy water](#).

— From the on-line *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This article was most recently revised and updated by [Adam Augustyn](#).

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Church**

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Mark your Calendar!

We will be gathering
at Inman's for fellow-
ship and bowling on
Sunday, February 20,
at 1:00pm.

Please join us!



FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Epiphany, January 2, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Baptism of Our Lord, January 9, 9:00am Non-Communion Service

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 16, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 23, 9:00am Non-Communion Service

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 30, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 6, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 13, 9:00am Non-Communion Service

The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, February 20, 9:00am Holy Communion

The Transfiguration of Our Lord, February 27, 9:00am Holy Communion

Ash Wednesday, March 2, 7:00pm Holy Communion

The First Sunday in Lent, March 6, 9:00am Holy Communion

The First Wednesday in Lent, March 9, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

The Second Sunday in Lent, March 13, 9:00am Non-Communion Service

The Second Wednesday in Lent, March 16, 7:00pm Evening Prayer

