



# Shining Mountains *news*

"IT IS OUR MISSION, AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD AND COMMAND TO GROW IN HIS WORD, TO GATHER AROUND HIS WORD, AND TO GO WITH HIS WORD."

*As Christians living in "this present evil age" (Gal. 4:1), God calls us to respond to an increasingly unchristian culture*

## "Happy Holidays"?

The "War on Christmas" makes the headlines every year. Anchors on the evening news fill us in on which department store chains have forbidden their employees to say "Merry Christmas" and run stories on towns that now have annual "holiday parades," instead of Christmas parades. "The war against Christmas is being waged in corporate boardrooms and city council meetings," they say.

Maybe so, in some ways. But as a Pastor, as a father trying to raise a child who knows her Savior and as a Christian, I have to say: It really doesn't bother me.

That might take a word of explanation. It saddens us, doesn't it, that many people don't know the joy of their Savior's coming? And it's a bit *silly*, isn't it (there's almost no other word for it), that our world is so hyper-sensitized that acknowledging the existence of a holiday could be considered *offensive*?

The reason the annual "controversies" don't bother me is that the "War on Christmas" isn't really fought in boardrooms or council meetings. It's a distraction to think it is. No one will become more or less of a Christian if

their Target cashier wishes them a *Merry Christmas* or *Happy Holidays*. The "war" is fought on far different terrain. The battle for our faith is fought around our dining room tables, when we set aside time (or *don't* set aside time) to have family devotions. It's fought in our living rooms as we either show our families what forgiveness is when we deal with each other—or fail to do so. It's fought at our church, as we either gather around God's Word and seek to share it with the world around us—or as we decide not to fight those "battles." And above all, we fight that battles that truly count as we go to God in prayer for the spread of the gospel.

On the first Christmas, the angels announced the good news of Christ's birth. But then they stopped. God passed that heavenly privilege on to shepherds, to the magi, to fishermen-turned-apostles, to you and to me.

There's certainly reason to be concerned about decline of Christianity in the world. It's sad and silly that Christmas greetings becomes fodder for the evening news. But the answer isn't found in parades or cashiers;



God's called *us* to be the answer as we share his Word. What an honor and joy!

When someone hands me my receipt and wishes me "Happy Holidays," I smile and think to myself, "Yes, these are very happy *holy* days because of our Savior. I can't wait for a chance to share that news with you and the world."

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year!

# Shining Mountains' Epiphany Party

*An evening of fellowship and fun*

Join us for a chance to get to know one another outside of our church walls and enjoy some food and fun downtown.

Shining Mountains is looking to organize an Epiphany party for her adult members on Thursday, January 13, at Montana Ale Works in downtown Bozeman. We'll have our own "semi-private" area of the restaurant to mingle with each other. For \$15 a person, Ale Works will supply generous appetizers for us. Those who wish to order drinks can begin their own tab to do so. The appetizers will be put out for us at about 7:00 pm. The Ale Works also has pool tables for those interested.

If any parents wish to "pool" their children for babysitting, speak to the Seiferts about dropping their children off at the parsonage and sharing a few babysitters between our families.

In order to have space held for us and to see if we have enough interest to make this happen, **please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board by Sunday, January 2** if you'd like to attend (please list how many people will be in your party). If you have any questions, speak to Pastor Seifert.



**Growing in Hope** is "basics-of-the-Bible" study that we're currently following in our Sunday morning Bible study (9:00 am). It serves as a chance to review the basic teachings of Holy Scripture and deepen our knowledge of God's saving love for his people and his will for our lives.

If you've not taken part in a Bible class recently, this may be a good time to ask yourself, "Why not?" God promises that as we grow in faith through his Word, he blesses us with more understanding, more patience, more peace, more joy. Who wouldn't want more of these?

This current Sunday class should finish around Easter.

## Continuing to Grow in Our Knowledge of the Word

### A Teen Group for Shining Mountains?

A chance to grow in the Word and get to know each other

Shining Mountains is blessed with a healthy number of members from late grade school through high school. What a gift from God!

In January, you're invited to help us take a look at how we can best serve and encourage this age group. **Immediately after worship on Sunday, January 16**, we'll have a brief meeting to discuss how we might run a teen group here.

Who's invited to the meeting? If you're between 7th-12th grade (or the parent of one who is), we'd certainly like to have you there. If you don't fit into that category but would be interested in helping organize a few outings, feel free to join us for the meeting, too.

God-willing, our youth group can blend opportunities to

have fun with one another, serve others, and grow in God's Word. The tentative plan is to have a group Bible study every two months. On the other months, we'd look for different sets of parents (or other members) to be willing to organize an activity—a chance to hike or ski, catch a movie, serve our community or our congregation, or whatever else comes to your mind.

If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Seifert at 406.586.7979 or [pastor@shiningmountains.org](mailto:pastor@shiningmountains.org).

See you in January!



# Spiritual Truths in Wood & Stone—part 2 of 6

*A five month series that looks at the ways our houses of worship express the truths confessed there*

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to meet God?

Moses did just that. God appeared to him a number of times, and it always seemed to go the same way. On Mt. Horeb he spoke to him through a burning bush, and Moses took off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:5). God spoke to him again on Mt. Sinai and revealed himself, but God's glory was so powerful that God had to hide Moses away in a cleft of the mountain and shield his face lest the glory destroy Moses. God is so far "above us" that to meet with God is an awesome and powerful thing.

Elijah met with God, too. When God spoke to Elijah, he sent a great wind, a powerful earthquake and raging fire—but God wasn't in any of these. Instead, God came to Elijah in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-13). He learned the same truth that Martha's sister Mary realized as she sat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42) and that the Apostle John knew as he leaned against Christ during the Lord's Supper (John 13:21). God is so near to us that to meet with him as a wonderful, personal thing.

Both are true. The Bible teaches that God is awesome, powerful and beyond our ability to comprehend; we call that God's *transcendence*. God also tells us that he delights to draw near to us, wash away our sins, and call himself our friend; we call that God's *immanence* (his "remaining near us").

What do those truths look like in wood and stone? When we gather in God's house, we want what we see to remind us that we're in the presence of an almighty God—but *not* in a way that fills us with terror. And we want the building to remind us that God draws near to be with us and dwell at peace with us—but as our *dearest friend*, not our "good buddy."

Over the last seventeen hundred years, Christian churches have expressed these truths in different ways. While not every way is practical in every setting (it's easy to give a sense of God's *transcendence* with a towering cathedral, but...), there are a few questions and applications that are beneficial to think through:

- **The use of light.** St. John reminds us that "God is light" (1 John 1:5). Light (especially *natural* light) can be effectively used in a sanctuary as a reminder of God's awesome presence and nature. It's also one of the reasons why churches still use candles in the age of incandescent and CFL bulbs. However, an architect has to carefully think through how to design and position a building to capture and use Sunday morning light in a way that emphasizes God's presence—without glaring in the eyes of Sunday morning worshipers!
- **The use of nature.** Our God is the one who created the heavens and the earth. Often times, incorporating natural materials in a building highlights God's immanence. This doesn't necessarily come at a great cost: exposed wooden supports and furniture, a thoughtful placement of plants, tile or other flooring that resembles stone, even water constantly circulating in a font—all of these can call to mind a God who created this world and still "fills heaven and earth" (Jer. 23:24).
- **Lines of sight.** Spires are often used on the exterior of churches to "point towards heaven." A well-planned ceiling can also direct our eyes and minds towards heaven while we're inside a church. A gentle pitch can turn a room from a "meeting hall" to a place that reminds us to set our minds "on things above" (Colossians 3:2). At the same time, placing the altar and font in accessible locations reminds us that God makes his dwelling among people.
- **What can we achieve best?** No church on earth will ever perfectly balance and communicate both God's transcendence and his immanence. And no church works with unlimited resources to do so. Currently, we worship in a converted house—that brings some limitations! But the people who remodeled it seemed to give some thought to these concepts. A window is placed high in each peak, bringing in some light and pulling our eyes upward—a reminder of God's transcendence. The very nature of the room almost forces a sense of immanence as we gather closely together and close to the font, pulpit and altar. With some thoughtfulness at the beginning of a project, many smaller WELS churches have attained a wonderful sense of both God's transcendence and immanence that impresses those truths on both member and visitor alike—without constructing a towering cathedral.

A building is a simply a building—churches included. Every building will pass away on the last day, if not sooner. But for now, these buildings get to be places where we come to meet with God. That means we give special thought to how they look and what truths they communicate. As we continue to pray for and work towards a new home, may he grant us wisdom to think through how our building might confess what our mouths sing of: the God whose nature and power are beyond our comprehension, yet delights to dwell among us.

## CONCEPTS THAT SHAPE LUTHERAN ARCHITECTURE

Over the next five months, this article will explore the ways these concepts shape Lutheran church buildings:

- *The Means of Grace*
- *Transcendence and immanence*
- *Mutual Encouragement*
- *Past and present*
- *Symbolism*

# Confirmation Class

Confirmation class for the first half of 2011 resumes on Wednesday, January 5th at 6:30 pm. It runs until 8:00 pm. (This will continue to be our schedule until Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 9th, at which time we'll change again to another weeknight.)

Confirmation class is the course of study and preparation for entrance into adult (and communicant) membership in our congregation. It's the equivalent of our adult *Basic Information Course*. Since our youth may not come into the class with the same life experiences that most of our adults have, and since they have a strong ability to learn and retain new information at this age, the course of study is 2-3 years, instead of the 4-5 months that we usually spend with our adults in Basic Information.

Shining Mountains currently has three students enrolled in Confirmation Class. Please continue to keep their studies and spiritual growth in your prayers.

# Voters' Meeting

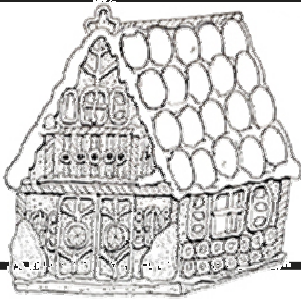
Shining Mountains next congregational voters' meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 30th**, immediately after church. A light meal will be provided for those attending, and the meeting should adjourn by 1:00 pm.

Our agenda for the meeting includes the following:

- Approving a ministry plan & budget for 2011
- Hearing a summary of the ministry we carried out in 2010, as well as a year-end financial report
- Receiving a preliminary report from Council with updates on the three building / ministry approaches the Council has considered as we move forward

We look forward to your presence, assistance and questions at the meeting. May the Lord continue to bless and prosper the work we carry out together!

HIS HOLY SPIRIT  
FILLS THE WORLD



## Gingerbread House Decorating

Many thanks to the McGough family for organizing the gingerbread house decorating at church on December 18th. The "finished products" were delivered to some of our "shut-in" members and others in nursing or assisted-living homes across Bozeman.

## Serving Us in January *Thanks to those who served in December!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
1/2	L Baker / B Ballard	open / open	open	Ballard
1/9	A Pruitt / A Bublit	open / open	open	Becker
1/16	R Buchholz / P Agenten	open / open	open	Buchholz
1/23	D Gustafson / D Gentry	open / open	open	Giese
1/30	J Hammer / B Thiede	open / open	open	Gustafson

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. **Psalm 84:10**

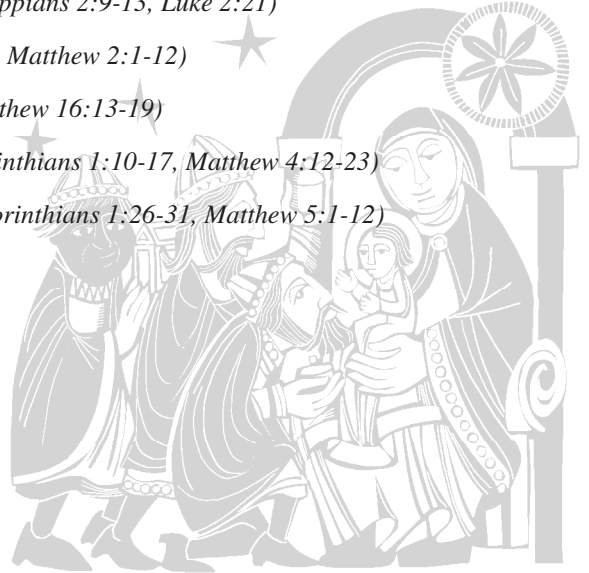
# Upcoming Messages

Throughout January we worship in the seasons of *Epiphany*. The word *Epiphany* means “appearing”; it’s the season when we celebrate that God revealed Christ as a Savior of *all* people. Below is a list of both our Sunday worship themes and focuses.

May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

## *Sundays in January*

- Jan 2     *The Festival of the Name of Jesus (Numbers 6:22-27, Philippians 2:9-13, Luke 2:21)*
- Jan 9     *The Epiphany of our Lord (Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:2-12, Matthew 2:1-12)*
- Jan 16    *The Confession of St. Peter (Acts 4:8-13, 2 Peter 1:1-4, Matthew 16:13-19)*
- Jan 23    *The Third Sunday after the Epiphany (Isaiah 9:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, Matthew 4:12-23)*
- Jan 30    *The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (Micah 6:1-8, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 5:1-12)*



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# January 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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<b>2</b> 9:00 Sunday School/ Bible class 10:00 Worship w/ H.C.	<b>3</b> <b>4</b>		<b>5</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>6</b> 6:15 pm Church Council	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b> 9:00 Sunday School/ Bible class 10:00 Worship	<b>10</b> <b>11</b> Pastors' conference / Helena, MT		<b>12</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>13</b> <i>Epiphany party?</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 9:00 Sunday School/ Bible class 10:00 Worship w/ H.C.	<b>17</b> <b>18</b>		<b>19</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>20</b> 6:30 pm Church Council	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 9:00 Sunday School/ Bible class 10:00 Worship	<b>24</b> <b>25</b>		<b>26</b> 6:30-8 pm Confirmation Class	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 9:00 Sunday School/ Bible class 10:00 Worship 11:30 Voters' Meeting	<b>31</b>					

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