



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."

Jesus did

All of This, for Me!

When you think of Jesus' life, I'd be willing to make a guess about a few of the things that come to your mind: Walking on the water, raising the dead, feeding thousands—and, of course, his death on the cross and his resurrection. That's wonderful! God wants us to remember those things!

I'm not sure you'd think about what God had St. Luke record for us in Luke 2, though. Luke tells us about the way Mary and Joseph had Jesus circumcised when he was eight days old, just like God's law required. And he tells us how his parents brought him to the temple in Jerusalem for a purification ceremony, just like God's law required.

What do those things matter for you and me?

Maybe you think of the good example that Mary and Joseph set in making the spiritual well-being of their child a top priority. That's good! God does want every parent to think about what it means to take care of their child's souls as they have them baptized, teach them about their Savior, pray for them and bring them to church.

But that's not really the point here.

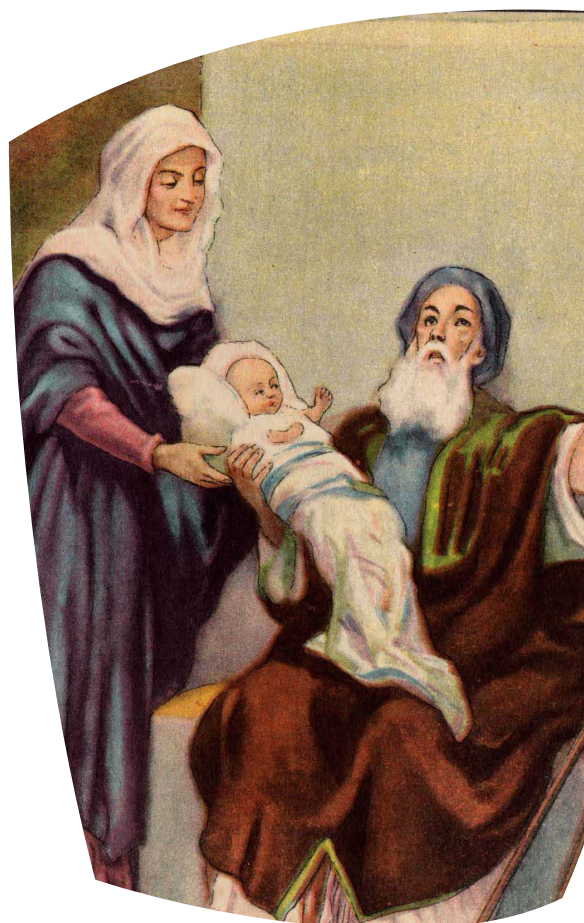
For the people of Israel, God de-

manded that they had to take part in those rites and ceremonies as part of their life with him. So even as a baby, Jesus did. God doesn't demand the same ceremonies from us—Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament ceremonial laws—but look what Jesus was doing: from the very first days of his life, he was *living* for us. He was doing everything God demanded from his people.

Here's why that matters: Think about the year that's ahead of you. Throughout this year, you'll be filling any number of different roles. You may be a husband, a wife, a mother, a father, son or daughter, brother or sister. You're a friend, a boss, an employee. You're a church member. A student. A teacher. In every area of your life, there are things that God says are right and God says are wrong. Isn't it overwhelming—terrifying, even!—to stand at the beginning of a new year and think about what God demands?

Then remember the Christchild in the temple. From the very beginning of his life, he was fulfilling every one of God's requirements for you. He was living the perfect life that God demands from you. He was being what I and I have not been—perfect.

Sometimes I feel daunted at the begin-



ning of the New Year. So many things to be done, so much that I want to be! But there is a Savior who lived a perfect life for me, and everywhere I look, I see his righteousness, his perfection, his holy and precious blood covering all I do and fail to do. Can you believe it? Even as a child, Christ did all of this for you and for me!

I believe in + the Holy Christian Church +

In the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, we confess our faith in "the Holy Christian Church." Throughout our newsletters in 2012, we'll examine what this means. What is the Church? What is the difference between "the Church" and "churches"? What does it matter what church you belong to? What's going on among "Lutheran" churches? God's Word will guide our discussion as we talk about these questions.

You could be excused for grimacing or pausing when you say it: "*I believe in the Holy Christian Church.*" We confess those words in the Apostles' Creed. But what do you see when you look around? Some people will point to priests or pastors convicted of sexual abuse or televangelists who snatch money away from whomever will listen to them. "*The church is holy?*" Others might think of their church-going coworkers who act so differently on Monday than they do on Sunday morning. "*He's holy?*" Maybe you think of those things, too. Maybe you think even more about the guilt and sins that you struggle with as a member of the Church: "*I'm holy?*"

Something needs to be made absolutely clear from the beginning: when people—preachers or laypeople—act in deplorable and dishonest ways, they *are not* following the will of our Savior. What they do is a mark of shame both on our Lord and his Church.

But even if those actions *didn't* take place—even if every Christian you ever met was always nice and kind and moral and honest—that still wouldn't be an example of the holiness we're talking about when we confess that the Church is *holy*.

Consider the way that Martin Luther once said it: *I believe that there is on earth a holy little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ.* "Pure saints." The Church is made up of absolutely holy people. It sounds like a bit of a stretch, doesn't it?

Let's make it a bit worse. Have you ever paid attention to the people that God calls "holy" in the Bible? He gave that label to the people of Israel—yes, the Israelites who grumbled against God and worshiped idols. He called the Christians in Corinth holy, even though so many of them had lived lives of sexual immorality and paganism. And he calls *you* holy, too.

How can this be?

Ask anyone on the street to name a "holy" person and you'll

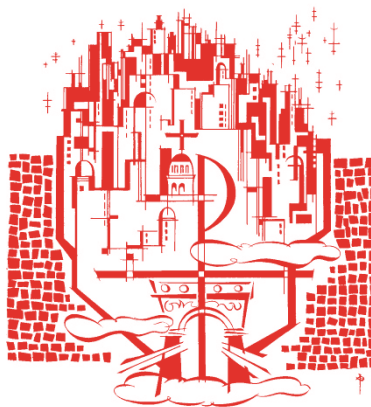
get the predictable answers: Mother Theresa, Billy Graham—even Gandhi or the Dalai Lama. When we think of holiness, we picture what people *do*. That's a natural way to think about it. In fact, God created us to live perfect and holy lives.

But we haven't. And by "we", I don't just mean you and I. No one has lived a holy life. St. Paul says it so clearly in Romans 3: *All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one* (3:12). That *no one* includes you and me, every minister or preacher, every last person who the world might consider holy.

So how can we still call the Church *holy*? When we say that, we aren't saying that believers are holy because of what *we* do for *God*. It's because of what *God* has done for *us*. Only God has a holiness that comes from himself. But when he became a man and lived and died for us, he gave us a holiness that we never had before. God says that in our baptisms, he clothes us with Christ's holiness (Galatians 3:27) - when God looks at us, he sees the holiness of his Son! We're holy because God makes us holy.

The Lord does call us to live holy lives. It's what he made and saved us for; it's God-pleasing that we do so. But the holiness of the Church is never found in its ministers or its members. It's found in Jesus' perfect life and innocent death.

When we confess the Apostles' Creed in church and you confess that the Church is holy, you might be tempted to think of the abuses of its ministers, the immorality of its members or the sins in your own past. The next time you speak those words, though, try something different. Picture God's perfect Son, shedding his holy blood on the cross to take away the sins of the world. See him taking the white robe of his holiness and wrapping it around all those who believe in him. Hear him telling you that he's been perfect and righteous in your place as a gift of love to you, and rejoice to confess that God's people are *holy*.



January	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy</u> Christian Church</i>
February	<i>I believe in the Holy <u>Christian</u> Church</i>
March	<i>I believe in the Holy Christian <u>Church</u></i>
April	<i>The joy of the Church</i>
May	<i>The mission of the Church</i>
June	<i>Orthodox and Heterodox churches</i>

July	<i>Do denominations really matter?</i>
August	<i>"So what if they're not WELS?"</i>
September	<i>What's going on among the Lutherans?</i>
October	<i>WELS: The confession we share</i>
November	<i>WELS: The challenges we share</i>
December	<i>WELS: The mission we share</i>

Bible Study



God promises us every blessing as we grow in His Word. Consider taking advantage of the following opportunities to study with your fellow believers:

SUNDAY MORNING: THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES

Real Faith for Real Life

Starting January 8th, our Sunday morning study will focus on the New Testament book of James. Christians over the years have struggled with James because of its emphasis on what we *do*—even though the Bible clearly teaches that we're saved by *grace*. As we study the book, God grant that he gives us understanding and strength to live the lives our Lord created and redeemed us for!

FRIDAY MORNING: WISDOM LITERATURE

Heavenly wisdom for earthly lives

Starting **Friday, January 27 at 9:00 am**, we'll begin a new *weekly* morning Bible study at Shining Mountains. Over the next few months we'll dig into the Old Testament books classified as *wisdom literature*. These unique books of the Bible (Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Song of Songs and Job) force us to wrestle with difficult concepts as we put God's wisdom into practice in our daily lives. We'll begin our study with the book of Ecclesiastes, where the Teacher teaches us how to wrestle with the meaning of life.

MONTHLY: LET THERE BE LIGHT!

An overview of the first five books of the Bible

Our monthly Bible study next meets on Thursday, January 19th at 7:00 pm. As we continue our walk through the five books of Moses, we'll focus on the Great Flood and the life of Abraham. To prepare for the class, consider reviewing Genesis 6-25.

Building project update

Proposed new location:

The congregation gave great support to making an offer on the corner of Baxter and Davis. That work is still going forward. The development group that owns the property is researching what site-improvements they would need to make before the city would allow them to subdivide the land. The amount of work they need to do yet has obvious implications for our purchase of the land.

Parsonage update:

The Seiferts have now relocated to their new home in Bozeman. The parsonage is listed for sale; a number of walk-throughs have taken place, and an open house will be scheduled in January. In the meantime, the Council is also looking into the possibility of renting out the house on a monthly basis.

Grants and other financial news:

God blessed Shining Mountains with an incredible Christmas gift—a \$45,000 grant towards the design of a new church from the Antioch Foundation. (For more information on the Antioch Foundation, see bulletin announcements or visit www.theantiochfoundation.org.)

2011 also saw a clarification of our status with the WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). Because of the size and nature of our worship space, Shining Mountains should now be eligible for both a low interest rate (4%) on a new loan as well as a significant grant towards construction costs of a new church home.

What should we make of this news? First, thanks be to the Lord for his goodness to his people and the incredible gifts he's pouring out on us. Shining Mountains should understand these grants as votes of confidence in the work we're able to carry out and the ripeness of the fields around us. Pray that the Lord would continue to use our work to share the message with others. Pray that we're able to move forward with a spirit of unity, as brothers and sisters united in and by the gospel. May the Lord continue to bless our efforts!

Growing in Christ

Shining Mountains provides a Sunday School program to partner with parents in raising our children in the truth of God's Word. Each month, parents can look to this page of the newsletter and see their student's upcoming lessons, memory work, and updates about when the children will next sing in our worship services.

Date	Lower grades (Miss Newton)	Middle grades (Mrs. Giese)	Upper grades (Mrs. Baker)
1/1	God keeps Jesus safe <i>He will command his angels to guard you. (Ps 91:11)</i>	David and Goliath <i>Trust in the Lord with all your heart (Proverbs 3:5)</i>	David and Goliath <i>In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalm 56:11)</i>
1/8	Young Jesus visits the Temple <i>Children, obey your parents. (Co 3:20)</i>	David shows kindness to Saul <i>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Eph 4:32)</i>	David shows kindness to Saul <i>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Eph 4:32)</i>
1/15	Jesus is baptized by John <i>A voice from heaven said, "This is my son." (Mt 3:17)</i>	David's sins <i>Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. (Matthew 26:41)</i>	David's sins <i>Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak (Matthew 26:41)</i>
1/22	Jesus changes water into wine <i>God cares for you. (1 Pe 5:7)</i>	Solomon's wisdom <i>Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105)</i>	Solomon's wisdom <i>Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105)</i>
1/29	Jesus calms the storm <i>"Call upon me in the day of trouble. (Ps 50:15)</i>	Elijah and the prophets of Baal <i>For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23)</i>	Elijah and the prophets of Baal <i>The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so (Romans 8:7)</i>

The Sunday School children will next sing in worship on Sunday, February 12th. The song we're working for on that date is "Children of the Heavenly Father."

Serving Us in January *Thank you to those who served in December!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
1/1	J Newton / L Hunziker	open	open	Newton (1/2-1/7)
1/8	J Lauersdorf / T Zulauf	open	open	Pruitt, D&P (1/9-1/14)
1/15	T Linn / P Marozick	open	open	Pruitt, A&R (1/16-1/21)
1/22	D Pruitt / M Joecks	open	L & V Baker	Seifert/Stubbs (1/23-1/28)
1/29	J Kohler / T Armbrrecht	open	open	Thiede (1/30-2/4)

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

January 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C.	2	3 6:30 Confirmation Class	4 6:00 Church Council meeting	5	6	7
8 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship 11:30 Ladies' Fellowship meeting	9	10 6:30 Confirmation Class	11	12	13	14
15 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C.	16	17	18	19	20	21
<i>Pastors' conference in Fernie, British Columbia</i>						
22 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship	23	24 6:30 Confirmation Class	25	26	27 9:00 am "Wisdom Literature" weekly Bible study begins	28
29 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship 12:00 Voters' meeting	30	31 6:30 Confirmation Class				

Upcoming Messages

The month of January marks the first half of the season of “Epiphany”. Our readings and hymns focus on Jesus making himself known through his teachings and miracles as the Savior of all people.

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

Worship in January

January 8: *The baptism of our Lord—The glory of our life with Christ is by faith, not by sight*

January 15: *The Second Sunday after the Epiphany—Christ calls us to believe and follow him*

January 22: *The Conversion of St. Paul—God uses sinners to save sinners*

January 29: *The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany—Why follow Jesus?*

