



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."

Celebrating

A Festival Undisturbed

The world doesn't seem to care much for the Church's celebration of Lent. Maybe that's ok.

You almost cringe when you get to Easter, don't you? We try to focus our hearts on the resurrection of our Savior, and all around us we see neon green grass, cute bunnies and brightly colored eggs. When Christmas rolls around, we find ourselves surrounded by a jolly old elf in a red suit, red-nosed reindeer and door-buster sales.

Not to cry "bah humbug!"—it certainly isn't wrong to read about the Grinch's efforts to steal Christmas or to enjoy a Cadbury treat from time to time—but don't you want to cry, "Leave our festivals alone!"? The world seems quick to take and twist the most meaningful times of the Church Year.

No one seems to do that with Lent, though. Your neighbors won't invite you to a Lenten cookie exchange. You won't set the alarm to get up at 5:00 am for great Palm Sunday Savings at Walmart.

Fine by me! While we want *everyone* to know and care about what we celebrate in Lent, thank God that—for now, at least—it hasn't been commercialized by the world.

It's easy to see why not. Lent is a difficult time. It's a soul-searching time, a time of spiritual warfare. Easy? Not at all. Lent isn't easy. It's *powerful*. It's *meaningful*. It's *important*.

May God grant you a meaningful walk through Lent this year. May the services at church give you a deeper understanding of God's love. May your Bible reading at home bring you closer to him. Below is a brief explanation of our Lenten worship:

Ash Wednesday

On Wednesday, Feb. 22, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday worship at 7pm. The service (with the Lord's Supper) is a call to repentance and trust in God's gracious Savior.

Midweek Lenten worship

Every Wednesday in Lent, we meet at 7pm. Under the theme "What Wondrous Love Is This!", we'll review the chief teachings of God's Word.

Maundy Thursday

On April 5, our service focuses on Christ's Last Supper, as he continues to feed his people.

Good Friday

On April 6, we observe a traditional *Service of Darkness* to impress on us what took place on the darkest day in



history—the day that God gave his life for the sins of his people.

Sundays in Lent

During the Sundays of this season, we worship under the theme, *Fix Your Eyes on Jesus*. May we find every blessing and comfort from God as we do just that!

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.

Ask a Christian what church they belong to and you could expect any number of answers: "I go to the Methodist church." "I belong to the Presbyterian church." Maybe something like "I was baptized Lutheran" or "I was raised in the Catholic church."

There's a truth to those words, but they miss the point a bit. In the truest sense there is only *one Church*. It's not the Lutheran church, nor is it Methodist, Presbyterian, non-denominational or Catholic. The Apostle Paul talks about it in these words:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians. 2:19-20)

What's the one true Church? It's *Christ's Church*. The true Church is, as Paul said elsewhere, "all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Christ takes all those people and unites them into "his body" (Ephesians 1:22).

Now, before we go any further, it should be said: *This does not mean that church denominations or difference in doctrine don't matter. Christ himself said those differences matter very much* (John 8:31, Matthew 28:20)! In fact, this article will address those differences and their importance for three months this summer.

But there's something infinitely important about remembering that the Church is built on Christ, and him alone: *Christ is the source of my salvation*. You weren't baptized *Lutheran*; no pastor put water on you *in the name of Dr. Martin Luther*. You were "baptized into Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3). You aren't assured of heaven because the Lutheran Reformers wrote down accurate confessions of the Bible in the 1500s. You are assured of heaven because of the Jesus that those Reformers confessed

so faithfully.

That's worth remembering, because Christ calls us all to stand firm in that faith.

When we find ourselves straying from the truth or staying away from church, we *can't* comfort ourselves with the thought, "But I'm a member of the Lutheran church." We need to go back to our connection to Christ our Savior. Are we staying away from his Word? Jesus warns us that we're staying away from *him*. Are we indulging in sins? Jesus warns us we're destroying our faith—regardless of what church we "belong to."

And when we see those sins, our greatest comfort isn't going to be found in our earthly church membership; it's the in Jesus that our church proclaims. Even if our fellow members remember our sins, we can take comfort that Jesus doesn't. Even if people in our congregation fail to show a perfect love, we know our Lord Christ will always be there with a perfect love.

And it's worth remembering because our allegiance is to Jesus, not an earthly institution.

I'm proud to be a member of a Wisconsin Synod church; as a church body we confess God's Word faithfully and accurately (more on that in October's newsletter!). But my faith isn't in the WELS or Martin Luther. If the truth should ever depart from our church body (as it has from many other Lutheran churches in America and from the church in Luther's own country), we're to remember a clear truth: we're not to follow man, but to follow Christ.

What does it mean to be part of the holy *Christian Church*? It's to rejoice in a miracle beyond our eyes: through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God takes sinners—even a sinner like me—and connects us to himself. He promises us life in heaven through the truths of his Word. God bless us as we hold to that Word because, when we do, we hold to Jesus.



January	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy</u> Christian Church</i>
February	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy Christian Church</u></i>
March	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy Christian 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

Faith that Works

Throughout January and February, 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*. Through our study, God give us understanding and strength to live the lives our Lord created us for!

FRIDAY MORNING: WISDOM LITERATURE

Heavenly wisdom for earthly lives

Our new *weekly* morning Bible study at Shining Mountains meets Friday mornings at 9:00am. 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. Our study with the book of Ecclesiastes, where The Teacher teaches us how to wrestle with the meaning of life itself.

MONTHLY: LET THERE BE LIGHT!

An overview of the first five books of the Bible

Our monthly Bible study next meets on Thursday, February 16th at 7:00 pm. As we continue our walk through the five books of Moses, we'll focus on the life of Abraham. To prepare for the class, consider reviewing Genesis 12-25.

Pastors' Conference in Fernie, BC

Pastor Seifert spent January 16-18th at a hotel in Fernie, British Columbia, at a conference with WELS pastors from Montana and Canada. The congregation pays for this and similar conferences (the total cost to the congregation for this conference was about \$300). What happens at these, and why do we prioritize them?

The conference serves a number of purposes:

- ☞ **Refreshment** While these aren't intended as a "vacation", the conferences do seek to give a different kind of refreshment. They begin with worship, and those who are used to preaching and administering the Lord's Supper have instead a chance to *be fed* with God's Word as we sit in the pews while a brother shares God's Word with us. Each day's work begins and ends with a devotion as well.
- ☞ **Spiritual and Professional Growth** The annual Spring conferences that our pastors attend are designed primarily as opportunities for ongoing education. While not as intense or in-depth as returning to the Seminary for 2-3 weeks of study, over the two main days of the conference the pastors took part in six hours of intensive studies on sections of the Old Testament. This year, Rev. Charles Cortright (an ordained WELS minister and professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College) led our study.
- ☞ **Conference business** A number of hours are devoted to hearing updates on local and Synod-wide work and assisting pastors with local issues. We also spend time discussing items that impact our Synod. At this conference we shared thoughts, concerns and recommendations as our church body reacts to the revisions to the New International Version of the Bible so that our work might be shared with Synod leaders and delegates to the Synod convention.
- ☞ **Fellowship** Pastors (and at times, their families) get to reconnect with other ministers. It's a time to share joys and struggles, discuss challenges or opportunities in each others' ministries, and simply enjoy the fellowship of people in similar vocations.

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)
2/5	Jesus heals a paralyzed man <i>God cares for you. (1 Pe 5:7)</i>	Elijah goes to heaven <i>Because I live, you also will live (John 14:19)</i>	Elijah goes to heaven <i>Because I live, you also will live (John 14:19)</i>
2/12	Jesus brings a dead girl back to life <i>Because I live, you also will live. (Jn 14:19)</i>	Naaman is brought to faith <i>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)</i>	Naaman is brought to faith <i>God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3,4)</i>
2/19	Jesus feeds more than 5,000 people <i>Give us today our daily bread. (4th petition)</i>	God answers Hezekiah's prayers <i>Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor me (Psalm 50:15)</i>	God answers Hezekiah's prayers <i>Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you (Mt 7:7)</i>
2/26	Jesus teaches Peter to trust <i>Call upon me in the day of trouble. (Ps 50:15)</i>	The three men in the fiery furnace <i>Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only (Matthew 4:10)</i>	The three men in the fiery furnace <i>Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28)</i>

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

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

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
2/5	J Thiede / D Thiede	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Spalding (2/6-2/11)
2/12	J Becker / S McGough	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Agenten (2/13-2/18)
2/19	L Baker / B Ballard	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Armbrecht (2/20-2/25)
2/22	A Pruitt / T Franck	<i>(Ash Wednesday worship)</i>		
2/26	A Miller / B Thiede	<i>open</i>	<i>open</i>	Baker, E (2/27-3/3)
2/29	D Gustafson / D Gentry	<i>(midweek Lenten worship)</i>		

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

February 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 9am Wisdom Literature Bible study	4
			6pm Church Council meeting			
5 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C.	6	7 6:30pm Confirmation class	8	9	10 9am Wisdom Literature Bible study	11
12 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship	13	14 6:30pm Confirmation class	15	16 7pm Let There Be Light Bible study	17 9am Wisdom Literature Bible study	18
19 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Transfiguration Sunday worship w/ H.C.	20	21 6:30pm Confirmation class	22	23 7pm Ash Wednesday worship w/ Holy Communion	24 9am Wisdom Literature Bible study	25
26 9:15 Sunday School 9:20 Bible class 10:30 Worship	27	28 6:30pm Confirmation class	29 6pm Soup Supper 7pm Midweek Lenten worship			

Upcoming Messages

The month of February brings the season of *Epiphany* to a close and brings us into the season of *Lent*. May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

Worship in February

February 5: *The 5th Sunday after the Epiphany—God calls ME to follow him*

February 12: *The 6th Sunday after the Epiphany—Jesus takes risks on us*

February 19: *The Transfiguration of our Lord—A glimpse of glory!*

February 22: *Ash Wednesday*

February 26: *The 1st Sunday in Lent: Fix Your Eyes on Jesus... when it feels like you're giving up too much*

February 29: *Midweek Lent 1 (What Wondrous Love Is This!)*

