

THE MESSENGER

January 2021

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Annual Voters Meeting

Sunday, January 24 at 11:45 am

Elections will be held for the following positions of the church council for two-year terms except for Financial Secretary, which is for one year:

President,
Financial Secretary,
Treasurer,
Board of Christian Education,
Board of Elders,
Stewardship Committee,
Technology Committee.

A slate of nominees and a bylaw amendment recommendation are posted on the bulletin board near the elevator.

In this Messenger:

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- 4) Winter Parking
- 5) Bible Study Opportunities
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- 6) Sunday School Mission Country - Vietnam



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On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. (Luke 2:21)

Minor Festival: The Name of Jesus

You may agree or disagree with me, but New Year's Day is not a huge day of celebration. Many people celebrate New Year's Eve by going out to eat, to party, and to stay up late to see the new year; therefore, New Year's Day is a day to sleep in and not do anything. Traditionally in my family's house, New Year's Day was the day to start taking down the Christmas decorations. For some who make New Year resolutions, New Year's Day is the day they start doing it, but then even on this day they stop; therefore, this day is a day of failure which does not leave any joy.

But New Year's Day is a day for us Christians that can possibly be a day of celebration that we would never think of. If you go into your hymnals on pages 159-160, you will see Minor Festivals that have been celebrated by the Christian Church throughout time. **The very first minor festival on New Year's Day is the Name of Jesus.**

Why exactly do we celebrate the Name of Jesus, and why on this day? On December 25th we celebrate Jesus' birth. Jesus being a Jew means that he would be circumcised on the eighth day. The reason this happened was because God demanded the Jews, "On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised." (Leviticus 12:3). This was God's law for the Jewish people.

So why should we even celebrate this? Why make this a minor festival for our church? There are two reasons. First, **this proves to us that Jesus came to fulfill the Law in every way.** Although Jesus our God is above the law, he humbled himself in every way like us to keep the law. Second, think of what the picture of circumcision portrays. Circumcision portrays something being cut off. **For the Jewish people, the physical sign of circumcision meant that they were cut off from the rest of the world as a sign to establish themselves as God's chosen people.** But Scripture provides another reason for this picture of circumcision, "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live." (Deuteronomy 30:6). Therefore, **ultimately the picture of circumcision portrays our sinful nature being cut away from us.** But how can this be? We are born as sinners. We live our lives as sinners. We will die because we are sinners. So how can the sinful nature be cut away from us?

This is why we celebrate the minor festival of Jesus' circumcision and his name. Jesus shared in our humanity in every way, even being circumcised for us. He fulfilled the law in every way for us. And **the very name of Jesus, which he was given on the eighth day of his life, means Savior.**

This is our hope and joy, not only as we celebrate a new year, but in each and every year of our lives. So, although New Year's Day may not be a huge celebration for you, rejoice in the minor festival of Jesus' name and the hope that he brings.

- Pastor Neal Behm



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 8:00 am Worship w/ Guidelines (Holy Communion) 10:30 am Worship (Holy Communion)	4 5:00 pm Board of Christian Education Meeting	5	6 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:15 pm Catechism	7	8	9 9:00 am Men's Bible Study
10 8:00 am Worship w/ Guidelines 9:00 am Children's Choir 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 9:15 am Youth Education 10:30 am Worship	11 6:00 pm Women's Bible Study	12 6:30 pm Council Meeting	13 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:15 pm Catechism	14	15	16
17 8:00 am Worship w/ Guidelines (Holy Communion) 9:00 am Children's Choir 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 9:15 am Youth Education 10:30 am Worship (Holy Communion)	18	19 6:00 pm Youth Education Meeting	20 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:15 pm Catechism	21	22	23
24 8:00 am Worship w/ Guidelines 9:00 am Children's Choir 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 9:15 am Youth Education 10:30 am Worship 11:45 am Annual Voters Meeting	25	26	27 9:00 am Adult Bible Study 4:15 pm Catechism	28	29	30
31 8:00 am Worship w/ Guidelines 9:00 am Children's Choir 9:15 am Adult Bible Study 9:15 am Youth Education 10:30 am Worship						

Weekly Sunday Schedule

8:00 – 9:00 am	Worship Service with Guidelines such as distancing, face masks, reduced touch, etc.
9:00 – 9:15 am	Sunday School Music Time – basement
9:15 – 10:15 am	Education Hour – Adult, Teen, and Youth
10:30 – 11:30 am	Worship Service conducted in a traditional format

P-16 TUITION APPLICATIONS DUE:

P-16 Tuition Assistance applications for assisting students attending WELS preschool, elementary, secondary, and college level schools are due **February 1** for the spring semester. Applications are available in the narthex to the right of the education bulletin board. Place completed applications in the Board of Christian Education mailbox.

CALLED WORKER TUITION UPDATE:

Applications are due **February 1** and may be returned to the Board of Christian Education mailbox. The fund is currently below its maintenance goal. Please consider contributing to the fund; envelopes and assistance applications are to the right of the education bulletin board.

ONLINE GIVING: You can now support Christ Lutheran with online gifts and offerings via credit/debit card or through your savings or checking account. For more information or to give your offering online, visit www.christmerrill.com/giving.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

3 Henry Marheine	25 Christy Cordova
4 Allie Maschke	26 Mike Huth
5 Thomas Marheine	28 Mike Stockowitz
6 Diane Thoune	29 Corey Maschke
13 Nancy Natzke	29 Curt Whitson
18 Adeline Huth	29 Riley Secora
18 Stephanie Lange	

SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN'S

CHRISTMAS: The Children's Christmas service is available for viewing on the church's **Facebook page** (www.facebook.com/christmerrill) and **YouTube channel** (www.youtube.com/channel/UC3UiiWTY0_J6QFryRJNMNAw).

CONSTITUTION & BYLAW REVIEW

COMMITTEE: An advisory committee has been formed to review the portions of the Constitution & Bylaws that may conflict with each other. Now is the opportunity for members to pass along such areas. Extra copies of the Constitution & Bylaws are available by the narthex mailboxes. Please contact Scott Schult by **January 24** with these items in person, in his church mailbox, by emailing bylaws@christmerrill.com or calling 715-539-0250.

WINTER PARKING RESTRICTIONS: In the city of Merrill during **December, January, February, and March**, no person shall park any vehicle on any street except on:

1. The **odd-numbered side** of any street on **odd-numbered days**.
2. The **even-numbered side** of any street on **even-numbered days**.

Since the church's address is **1204 N. Sales Street**, vehicles not in the church parking lot should be parked on the church (west) side of Sales Street on even-numbered days and on the east side of Sales Street on odd-numbered days.

Please submit items for next month's Messenger by the 20th of this month to Messenger@ChristMerrill.com or place them in the Messenger slot located in the top row of church mailboxes in the narthex.

Bible Study Opportunities at Christ

Wednesday Adult Bible Study resumes **January 6** at 9:00 am with a study on the book of *Revelation*.



Men's Bible Study is held at 9:00 am on the **second Saturday** of the month. January's topic is the book of *Malachi*. To join the class virtually, use this link: <https://kennethcerney.my.webex.com/kennethcerney.my/j.php?MTID=mee950ca2249b82e65b6797a72758a2b1>
To join by phone, call: 1-415-655-0001 US Toll and enter meeting number (access code) 126 147 5214 and meeting password 63672425.

Sunday Adult Bible Study resumes **January 10** at 9:15 am with a study on *Church and State*.

To join the class virtually, use this link: <https://kennethcerney.my.webex.com/kennethcerney.my/j.php?MTID=mae7d2dd32e1bf0b17a2def7d92bcea47>
To join by phone, call: 1-415-655-0001 US Toll and enter meeting number (access code) 126 863 6922 and meeting password 23858242.

Women's Bible Study is held from 6-7 pm on the **second Monday** of the month through May. January's topic is *New Testament Names of God*. To join the class virtually, use this link: <https://meet.google.com/egv-bntw-ewt>

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST SIGN-UP:

Growing Together is an ongoing congregational Bible study intended to provide mutual support to each other to grow through individual, family or small group study. A new topic of study will begin **February 14**. Those interested in receiving a copy of the lesson in their mailbox may sign-up on the narthex sign-up board this month. To get an electronic copy in your email, sign-up at ChristMerrill.com/email and subscribe to the *Growing Together* Bible study.



The Sunday School children have chosen Vietnam to be their mission country this year; all Sunday School offerings will go to the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam.



Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lord is always with his church. Christians in the Hmong Fellowship Church in Vietnam are continuing to reach out to lost souls. **In 2020, the Holy Spirit brought more than 12,000 Hmong people throughout Vietnam to faith in Jesus.** The Hmong Fellowship Church has grown from 126,000 to 138,000 members.

Rev. Zang, one of the Hmong leaders, said, “Most of the pastors in the Hmong Fellowship Church have heard many scary things through television and radio about the impact of COVID-19, but they see it as less dangerous when compared to the lost souls who have no chance to hear the gospel before they die.”

Rev. Fong and his evangelism team reached out to many villages in his area. The Lord blessed their efforts, and they were able to establish **nine new mission congregations.**

The Lord also has provided a way for WELS to continue training the Hmong Fellowship Church leaders. In November, the Vietnam mission team responded to the request of the Hmong Fellowship Church and offered **Zoom training to 57 students.** WELS provided phones and internet connectivity when needed to allow these students to participate in online training classes. Rev. Joel Nitz taught the gospel of Mark, and Rev. Bounkeo Lor taught law and gospel. Instruction via Zoom is something new for the Hmong Fellowship Church, but the students were very excited.

While the Hmong Fellowship Church has been tremendously blessed, there are also some big challenges ahead. More than 1,360 leaders are waiting for someone to train them in the Word of God. They are also waiting to build more churches for new believers to worship their Lord. Lor explains that the Hmong Fellowship Church leaders are very skilled at doing evangelism in their communities.

The theological education center building project in Vietnam is still active but has been delayed due to COVID-19. Once Lor is able to visit Vietnam, he will arrange a Zoom or face-to-face meeting, if possible, between WELS and Vietnamese representatives. The government also wants to make this project happen as quickly as possible.

Lor shares that brothers and sisters in Vietnam send their greetings and say, “Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!” to all WELS members. They appreciate your help and support, especially to train their leaders in the Word of God. They also ask for your continued support and prayers.

Source: <https://wels.net/update-from-vietnam/>