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# THE MESSENGER

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February 2023

The newsletter of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## HIS FINAL STEPS

### Lenten Worship Opportunities

Wednesdays @ 6:30 pm

February 22 (Ash Wednesday with Holy Communion)

His Final Steps Led to a Dinner Celebration

March 1 His Final Steps Led to His Father's House

March 8 His Final Steps Led to a Fig Tree

March 15 His Final Steps Led to Some Greeks

March 22 His Final Steps Led to His Enemies

March 29 His Final Steps Led to a Tomb

#### In this Messenger:

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715-536-3313  
www.christmerrill.com  
www.facebook.com/christmerrill  
1204 N. Sales Street | Merrill, WI 54452



# The True Purpose of the Gospel

*“Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good – no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.” (Philemon 15-16)*

The month of February is known as African-American History Month. Many different persons or events are brought up during this month, but one topic that is brought up often is the topic of slavery. It is certainly true that slaves were mistreated and abused in our country. It is also true that slave masters misquoted the Bible to justify their actions. Because of this people have made accusations against the Bible because of its statements on slavery. As Christians, how are we to respond to such accusations?

First of all, it is important to understand that slavery back in Biblical times was very different than the slavery that existed in our country. In Biblical times slavery wasn't a racial thing. Anyone could become a slave either to pay off a debt or because they were captured in battle. But does this mean the Bible supports slavery?

To answer that question, take a look at the book of Philemon. It is a very short book that deals with this issue of slavery. Philemon was a slave owner and a Christian, but one of his slaves, Onesimus, ran away and traveled to Rome. In Rome Onesimus met Paul, and Paul converted him to the Christian faith. Onesimus was a great asset to Paul in his ministry, but Paul didn't want to keep Onesimus to himself and instead encouraged him to return to his master Philemon.

Onesimus willingly returned and delivered this letter to Philemon. Even though Philemon had every right according to Roman law to severely punish his slave for running away, Paul appealed to Philemon as a fellow Christian to forgive Onesimus for what he did. And this is what makes the above Scripture reading important. Paul explained that perhaps Onesimus was separated from Philemon so that they could have a new and better relationship between each other, no longer as a slave to his owner, but as brothers in Christ.


Here we see the true purpose of the gospel. **The gospel is not meant to be used to change social orders, such as slavery, but to change hearts.** It is the gospel that motivated masters to treat their slaves with respect and to provide for them just as their Master in heaven did for them (Colossians 4:1). It is the gospel that motivated slaves to obey and serve their masters for by doing so they would be obeying and serving Christ himself (Colossians 3:22-24). In the same way it is the gospel that motivates us to serve and to treat others well for Scripture describes every Christian as a slave of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22). We are not slaves because we are forced to obey Christ, but rather we willingly serve him since he is our Lord.

Therefore if anyone argues with you about the Bible supporting slavery, bring up these points. The Bible does not endorse slavery nor demands it to be overthrown because that's not the point of the Bible. **The Bible is meant to change our hearts to be brought to faith and to make us willing to serve our Lord** as Paul says in Ephesians 6:7-8, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.”

- Pastor Neal Behm

# February 2023

View the most up to date calendar at [christmerrill.com](http://christmerrill.com)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			<b>1</b> 9:00 am Adult Bible Study  6:30 pm Choir Practice	<b>2</b> 6:30 pm Catechism Class	<b>3</b> 1:45 pm <b>Worship @            Bell Tower</b>	<b>4</b> 9:00 – 4:00 <b>Marriage            Enrichment @            Trinity, Berlin</b>
<b>5</b> 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion)  10:20 am Children’s Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 6:00 pm <b>NLHS            Open            Forum</b>  7:00 pm <b>NLHS            Delegate            Meeting</b>	<b>8</b> 9:00 am Adult Bible Study  6:30 pm Choir Practice	<b>9</b> 6:30 pm Catechism Class	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 9:00 am Men’s Bible Study
<b>12</b> 9:00 am Worship  10:20 am Children’s Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	<b>13</b> 6:30 pm Women’s Bible Study	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 9:00 am Adult Bible Study  6:30 pm Choir Practice	<b>16</b> 6:30 pm Catechism Class	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> 7:15 – 3:30 <b>Men of His Word            Conference in            Oshkosh</b>
<b>19</b> 9:00 am Worship (Holy Communion)  10:20 am Children’s Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 9:00 am Adult Bible Study  6:30 Ash Wednesday Worship (Holy Communion)  7:30 pm Choir Practice	<b>23</b> 6:30 pm Catechism Class	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 9:00 am Worship  10:20 am Children’s Group Time 10:30 am Sunday School 10:30 am Teen Bible Study 10:30 am Adult Bible Study	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>				

8:00 am Sundays - worship service on the radio (96.3FM, 730AM)

9:00 am Sundays - worship service online at [youtube.com/@christmerrill](https://youtube.com/@christmerrill)

**SOFTBALL SIGNUP:** It's almost that time of year again! Church softball is right around the corner. Sign-up sheet is up in the narthex. Please indicate next to your name whether you would rather play competitive or casual softball because we may be looking into doing 2 teams.

**CRADLE ROLL COORDINATOR:** A person is needed to periodically distribute helpful packets that contain Christian parenting materials for pre-birth through age 4. It includes age-appropriate books, pamphlets with tips, songs, poems, and activities, and an age-appropriate music CD with vocal and accompaniment tracks. If you are interested in serving in this role, please contact Scott S.

**NORTHLAND LUTHERAN HIGH SCHOOL MEETINGS:** Tuesday, February 7. Open Forum in the chapel at 6:00 pm. Topics include enrollment, the Special Needs Scholarship Program, debt and debt reduction, and long range planning brainstorming. **Board/Delegate meeting** at 7:00 pm. Topics include next year's budget and each Committee's Fast Fives.

**DIGITAL DISPLAY WORSHIP AIDS:** The voters expressed their support for the demonstration of a digital display that will have elements of the day's service. It is anticipated that this will start on February 12.

**PRAYER SUPPORT:** Are there things going on in your life, or the life of others, that you would like your church family to pray about at a church service or during the week? Contact Pastor with a prayer request.

**SHUT-IN VISITATION:** The Elders welcome help from members visiting our shut-ins. Members are encouraged to visit and/or keep them in our prayers. Please reach out to Pastor or an elder for contact information.

Brad B.            Laurene H.        Tom L.  
Phil M.            Lorna P.            Kathleen P.

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS		
2 Neil V.	16 Rose S.	19 Jeff B.
3 Connor M.	17 Amanda K.	20 Emily B.
10 Jenny Z.	18 Jim Y.	20 Jennifer M.

**BOWLING:** There will be an afternoon of family bowling for members of Christ Lutheran, and you are welcome to invite your family and friends. Lanes have been reserved on **Sunday, March 19**, from 2:00-4:00 pm. The cost of bowling will be \$12, with shoes being an additional \$3, if needed. A sign-up sheet will be posted at the back of church, so we can make sure we have enough lanes reserved. Plans are to also eat somewhere, afterwards, for those who wish to continue to join us or just to join for the eating. That will probably be at Casa Amigos, to start eating around 4:30 pm.

**CHURCH UPDATES**

Worship Attendance

December weekly average of everyone that attended a Sunday service: **65**  
2022 weekly average of everyone that attended a Sunday service (includes Mondays during the summer and the midweek deer hunter's service): **66**  
2022 weekly average of everyone that attended at least one worship service a week: **74**  
Christmas Eve: **40**

Our Offerings to the Lord (as of 12/31/22)

Expected (budgeted) expenses: \$154,216  
Actual expenses: \$137,237  
Actual offerings: \$133,761

Our offerings for the year continue to trend below budget, but our expenses are also trending below budget. While our actual offerings are approximately \$20,455 below budgeted offerings, we are carrying a positive amount of approximately \$23,777 in the general fund.

For more information see the Treasurer Report on the bulletin board by the elevator.

Please submit items for next month's Messenger by the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month to [ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com](mailto:ChristMerrillEducation@gmail.com).