

Visions of Hope

December 3, 2017



F4356 State Hwy 97
Edgar, WI 54426

Mission Statement:

Hope's Mission is to teach the Bible and follow Christ's example by giving back to the community and those in need

Website:

hope4centralwi.com

Sunday Worship
9:30 am

Sunday School
8:45-9:30 am

Communion
1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays

Pastor:

Mark Reiff

pastorreiff.hopechurch@gmail.com

920-634-1246 (cell)
715-352-2555 (church)

Secretary:

hopelcsec@gmail.com

Duties List

December 10

December 17

Ushers

Jay Borchardt

Chad Erickson

Gary Ludwig

Leroy Syring

Greeters

Debbie Bauman

Pam Ludwig

Readers

Lily, Kylie, Reagan

Acolyte

Jaicee Kunkel

Madison Borchardt



December 6, according to the historic Church calendar followed by most Lutherans, is the Feast of St. Nicholas. This holy man, who died on December 6 in 360 A D, is revered, honored, and celebrated throughout the world. But, of course, many people know of him as Santa Clause or Sinter Klaus, or some other variation of that name in the many languages of the world.

Our American beverage company, Coca Cola, has made his popular red clad image iconic with its annual Christmas Season advertisements that feature a robust, jolly white bearded man, sack of gifts in one hand, and a bottle of "Coke" in the other hand. While this is a modern popular image of Santa it isn't (how shall I put it) a very honest or accurate portrayal of a very holy man.

First of all, St. Nicholas wasn't then, and isn't now, a shill for rampant consumerism. He was a priest and then a Bishop of the Church of Christ. He was the Bishop of Myra, a coastal city on the Mediterranean Sea, in a region we know today as Turkey. But more than this, because of his witness to Jesus Christ in his words and deeds, he was regarded as the patron saint of children, seafarers, and, surprisingly, pawnbrokers!

Due to Nicholas's concern for the welfare of the poor and especially for children he has morphed into our cultural Santa (saint) Claus (short for Nicolas). One of the stories told about Nicolas concerns a poor man in his community who had three daughters. The prospects for any of them to marry without a dowry were also poor. His oldest daughter was of marrying age and was to be wed but he had no dowry to give her. Was possible that the marriage might not even happen?

He was desperate. To make sure that the wedding for his first and oldest daughter would take place, the man made a terrible decision. He would sell his two younger daughters into slavery in order to raise enough money for a suitable dowry.

Nicholas heard of the man's plight and the man's decision. After all, the local gossips knew all about it. Out of love and compassion, Nicholas devised a plan of his own. Over three consecutive nights Nicholas went to the man's house and threw, each night, a small sack of gold down the chimney of the house. In other words, Nicholas anonymously gave the man three sacks of gold for his three daughters for three dowries. From this legend we get Santa, the gift giver, who enters our homes through chimneys bearing gifts for our children.

This story also gives us the image displayed on pawn shops the world over – three gold balls or three gold sacks – announcing the purpose of the place. Money is lent and redemption is always at hand. Yes, this is why St. Nicholas is also the patron of pawn.

Thirdly, Nicholas is also the patron saint of sailors. Myra was a coastal port city. Daily ships set sail from Myra laden with their cargo and daily ships arrived in Myra bringing supplies and goods to the city and surrounding region. But during the late autumn and winter the Mediterranean was beset (as it still is) with violent storms. It could be a very dangerous place for sailors. St. Paul knew this first hand as we read of his own shipwreck in the Acts of the Apostles. Yet, in the midst of this persistent danger there are several stories of Nicholas who, as an apparition or vision on the sea, came to men in their distress and guided them to safety. These sailors told their stories of deliverance and salvation, and, yes, Nicholas is the patron of sailors everywhere.

While Lutherans in America seem fixated on honoring St. John by applying his name to church, after church, after church that just isn't the case for Lutherans and other Christians the world over. I know it is hard for us to believe but the most popular and frequently used name for churches around the world is St. Nicholas.

As a man who surrendered his life over to Jesus Christ, Nicholas points us to many important facets of our Advent Christian faith as we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. We are pointed, first and foremost, to *caritas* (love and charity) which is a deep and profound love for the other that is rooted in our Savior's love for us.

"For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son" is writ large across the life of Nicholas. We are directed by reflected the light of Christ in Nicholas, to reflect that same light in our lives. We do this, we reflect this light of Christ, by displaying in our won lives a special care and tenderness toward the poor and the innocent, and especially our children, now and throughout the year.

Nicholas, who redeemed others, points us not only to our own redemption but also toward our own calling to help others in their journeys toward redemption. And, like Nicholas, who was seen leading others to safety and salvation while in midst of turbulence and danger, we to need to offer and share with others the Christian vision of hope and salvation in the turbulence and tribulation of our time.

Praying that you may know the power, blessing, and beauty of the Advent season.

Pax Christi,
Mark Reiff +

² *In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.* ³ *The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."* (Exodus 16:2-3).

The Israelites followed God's leading them to their freedom, but soon after decided they had been through enough and they expected things to be perfect and without difficulty. They wanted their freedom, their promised land and the ability to live as they saw fit, they wanted to make all the decisions instead of letting the Lord lead them. We find that continuing cycle many times in the bible. God provides and we complain that it's not good enough!!

I want my family home for Christmas, I want everyone around. I want to cook a big dinner and have all my family put their feet under my table. I want for all of us to get up Christmas morning and see the awe and wonder in the eyes of the children. Things are not the way I want them to be, the "I wants" overpower the "I am thankful for". Because of that, I had become ungrateful for all that God had given me and all that He had done. To begin with God gave me two great sons, beautiful grandchildren and a husband who is also my best friend. God delivered me from sin. And He chose a time and place to purify me and refine my faith in Him. God found a way to get me back on track, to let go of things that I can't change and to give me an "attitude of gratitude".

Discontentment is the enemy of faith, and selfishness blinds the heart from the will of God. Our greedy nature is hardening our hearts against the peacefulness that God offers. It is amazing to me how often we struggle to find God's will all because we can't get beyond our selfish desires. We want this, or we don't want that, and then we ask God to show us His direction for us--refusing to see it because it doesn't happen to fit within our guidelines. Continually wanting more than God is providing is just another way of thinking we are in control. How's that working out for you?

How many times do we ponder where we might be able to go, or where we have been, all because we are not where we want to be? How many blessings do we miss because we are so focused on the "something better" that we cannot see the "something best"? God wants us to have abundant life regardless of our circumstances, giving thanks in everything. But we find it is difficult to express true gratitude to God for where we are and what we have when we are always looking for something other than what He has given.

When we first moved to Wausau after we were married, we started out with a small three bedroom ranch house. I thought that small house was not quite up to my standards, or should I say, not what I dreamed it would be. But God taught me to appreciate that house; we had each other, and a family that actually loved each other. And on more than one occasion, God taught me to be thankful, because I knew that life without love is really sad. I had so much, but thanked God so very little.

God reminded me right then that the house we lived in was the place He had provided. I realized I had been ungrateful and asked His forgiveness. I had forgotten that as God is with us, even a so called 'shack' becomes a palace when that is the place where the King resides. For it is never about our house, our place, our city or our circumstances, but it's all about God who is with us regardless of how much we complain. What more could we possibly need? We all know money doesn't bring happiness, but the love of God and family is priceless. For if we actually stop and think about it, we really are sitting in the sweet spot of God love, grace, mercy and forgiveness.

1 Chronicles 16:34 *Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his faithful love endures forever.*

Your servant in Christ
Rosie Schilling



Thank you so much for the Thanksgiving card and gift card. It means so much! Since I will be working over Christmas as well I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas! Please keep me in your prayers as I finish up school in February and will be going on my fourth and final mission trip to the Henderson Settlement in Frakes, Kentucky. I cannot wait to see you all soon. Thank you all again and God Bless!
Kia Saige Lechleitner

Thank you so much for the generous gift card! It helped me get home during Thanksgiving break. I will be home during Christmas break and look forward to worshipping with all of you!
Xavier Lechleitner

Hope's Happenings

Sunday:	December 3	Attendance 103
Offering:	Regular	\$2675.00
	Building	\$120.00
	Sunday School	\$8.00
	Loose	\$42.25
	Well	\$300.00
	Christmas family	\$10.00
	Sign	\$90.00
	Mission	\$30.00
	Total	\$3275.25



Sunday, December 24
9:30 am Worship
5:00 pm Cantata

Monday, December 25
9:30 am Worship

Sunday, December 31
9:30 am Worship

PRAYER CONCERNS: Please remember the following people in your prayers

Dennis Woik—cancer—friend of Chad Bender
 Stan Blaszkowski—internal injuries sustained in fall—Michelle Bauman's dad
 Marge Manecke—health issues
 Corinne Kane—friend of Cassi Bauman
 Linda Krahn—breast cancer—sister in law to the Kamenick's
 Mildred Imhoff—chemo treatment—Ken's mother
 Grace Schraufnagel—cancer—friend of the Streckert's
 John Hamann—home recovering
 Shyra Martyn—breast cancer—Randy and Sara's daughter-in-law
 Don Hanson—health issues
 Leroy Syring—recovering from a stroke
 Paulette Kroll—Myleloid Leukemia—receiving chemo treatments
 Bill Brayton—DeEtta Peterson's brother
 Dylan & Logan Weichelt—sons of Bryan & Stacey
 Sawyer Mueller—microcephaly—Daryl & Beth's son
 Jennifer Bohman—prayers of healing



PRAYERS OF SUPPORT:

for the family of Wayne Klimpke whose funeral was Sunday

The Bulletin Board

- **Help beautify our church** by bringing a poinsettia. Please have to church by Sunday, December 10.
- **Congregational tree trimming** will be held at the end of service on Sunday, December 10.
- **There is still room** to donate food items for our local pantries! Due date is December 17. Thank you
- **Saturday, December 16, 6:30 pm** Sunday School Christmas Program practice
- **There will be NO Coffee Hour** on December 17 and December 24
- **Sunday, December 17, 9:30 am** Sunday School Christmas Program

COOKIE WALK

Time for our annual cookie walk. This year it will be on Sunday, December 17 after the Children's Christmas Program. Please bring cookies or candy if you can. EVERYONE is welcome to buy treats by the pound after the program. Thank you in advance.

