

# Visions of Hope

January 7, 2018



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**

**January 14**

January 21

**Ushers**

Andy Yoder

Ron Kunkel

Brian Remus

Ken Schilling

**Greeters**

Gary & Dianne Bauman

Keith & Cassi Bauman

**Readers**

Jen Kunkel

Hayley, Ashley, Natalie

**Acolyte**

Jaicee Kunkel

Haylee Schreiber



*The Wise Men, seeing him so fair,  
Bow low before him, and with prayer  
Their treasured eastern gifts unfold  
Of incense, myrrh, and royal gold.*

*The golden tribute owns him king,  
But frankincense to God they bring,  
And last, prophetic sign, with myrrh  
They shadow forth his sepulcher.*

These words were written in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century by Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius who lived in northern Spain and was a Christian poet and hymn writer. We still sing his hymns to this day and several of them are in our LBW hymnal. His words inspire us. But the words above point us to the very early Christian understanding of the importance of the Feast of the Epiphany. Unfortunately, the primary Feast Day of the Epiphany season is almost totally ignored by many contemporary western Christians.

January 6, is the Feast of the Epiphany and, regrettably, we almost never celebrate the day unless it falls on a Sunday. This day, however, is of enormous importance to Eastern Christians and Western Christians who live in Latin cultures. Its importance rivals, or even over shadows, Christmas in these cultures. But its significance, what it points to, should be important to us all.

What does the word *Epiphany* Mean? Literally it means the manifestation of some great mystery in a way that human beings can understand. An epiphany calls us to stand in awe before the brilliant power and majesty of the revealed mystery. The three wise men, spoken of in the hymn, are the genesis of that epiphany with regard to Jesus Christ the Son of God.

The mysteries epiphany is found in the three gifts that are given, and, in the very presence of the wise men themselves. There are several theories about the origin of the wise men but two stand out. One suggestion is that the wise men were Nabateans. Petra (a world heritage site), located in modern Jordan, was the Nabatean capitol city. King Herod was not a Jew but a Nabatean who married into the Jewish Royal family. Could it be that these seers were coming to warn him about the birth of a messiah who would pose a threat to his power and his throne?

Another theory, equally plausible, posits that the wise men came from Babylon and were very familiar with Jewish prophecy. Now how could this be? All we need to do is look at history. When the Jewish kingdom and Jerusalem were destroyed by Babylon around 600 B.C. the leaders, the educated, and the artisans were all taken into captivity. For 70 years the Jewish elite lived in Babylon. In this city of exile the Bible as we know it took shape at the hands of deported Jewish scholars. The various Hebrew manuscripts were organized in a coherent and comprehensive way. Their Babylonian overlords would have known what they were doing and would have been exposed to Jewish prophecy regarding a messiah. They also would have known about the signs and portents that would point to a remarkable king yet to come.

Regardless of their origin, the mere presence of the wise men is in itself an epiphany pointing to the mystery of Jesus. Along with the star in the sky as their guide, the wise men reveal to us that Jesus is the focus of our attention and at the heart of it all.

The wise men, the magi, or, as some call them, the kings, seeing the portent in the night sky, came to Bethlehem to find the promised one. Once they had found him, they gave him three remarkable gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Each of these gifts represents a further unfolding of the mystery...all essential parts of Our Lord's Epiphany.

*Gold*, of course, points to the future kingship of the child they found. Yet this kingship would prove to be profoundly upsetting not only to Herod, the King of the Jews, but also, and eventually, to Caesar in Rome. Indeed, it is equally upsetting and threatening to the petty Caesars of our own time and of every time. Jesus, you see, is the real ruler of everything and all other rulers pale by comparison.

*Frankincense* is used in worship and it point to the divinity of the one to whom it is given. Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God, is rightly given this offering of divine praise. In our liturgy for Vespers one versicle says it all; "P: Let our prayers be set forth before thee as incense. C: And the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice." Caesar, who thought himself a god, demanded incense but Jesus is freely given it by those who love and follow him.

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*Myrrh.* What an odd gift to give a little new born babe. Myrrh was used in the ancient world as a burial spice. When the deceased was bathed before burial, he or she was also wrapped in two cloths (one for the body and one for the head and face). Myrrh was wrapped in with the cloths perhaps as a sort of preservative or maybe to ameliorate the odor of decay. Nevertheless, the gift of this burial spice points the Christ child toward his eventual end and fate...death on a cross!

We, of course, as Christians know that Jesus' death was "a sacrifice once for all" and that his death would be short lived (no pun intended). On the third day he would rise from the dead and point us all toward the great Day of Resurrection. Then we will know the beautiful truth of these words written in scripture "*for God so love the world that he sent his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life.*"

May we, like the wise men following a star, be guided in this Epiphany Season to seek out and to know the beauty and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pax Christi,  
Mark Reiff+

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*Romans 8: 30-32 **What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?** He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, freely give us all things?...*

One thing will never change; we will have challenges every day. There are times in our lives, and not just once, but many times that we are faced with difficulties. We tend to treat each one of these bumps in the road as tragedies. But if we just take a deep breath and remember "if God is for us, who can be against". No doubt our feelings and emotions will keep us on a roller coaster, which we find hard to get off.

No one ever said life is going to be easy. We all have experienced rough times in our lives, some more than others. We all look for answers when bad things happen and especially when it happens to good people. It can also be very easy to start the blame game or the "what if" game after bad things happen. We tend to blame God instead of taking responsibility for the decisions we make that can cause these hardships to happen.

Let's face it though, we can't prevent or predict when bad things happen in our lives. Honestly, bad things are more than likely going to happen to us in the future. Life can be pretty complicated with mayhem and at times you may feel like you been knocked down so hard that you may never recover. There is hope though, just remember it can't rain all the time and there will be light eventually.

The way we overcome bad things is to keep pushing forward in life and not let it get bad times turn us away from God. How we get out of the "quicksand" is all dependent on the way we handle and react to the challenges of life. A good positive attitude should apply to everyday life, stop for a minute and get a clear head to prepare yourself to conquer this temporary setback in life. Reach out to God and ask for His help, He promised that He will be with us every minute even to the close of the age. The more you dwell on the negatives and the problem the more difficult it is to rise above. Some one once asked me if the "tragedies that happened 5 years ago, are worth all the worry and heartache? Huumm, maybe not.

There is a prayer called the Serenity Prayer that Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings use most often that focuses on having the strength to focus on what they can control and the strength to accept things they cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference. There is no point stressing yourself out in worrying about the things you can't control. Focus on what you can control and that is the present, not the past or impossible things for the future.

What we can control is our attitude, our effort, and our reactions to the big bumps in the road. Our focus every single day will be to control the things we can and to not worry about things we can't change. We need to worry less and to pray more. When life gives us a hard time, we usually wish that the hard times would happen to someone else. We experience the pain that results from the bad events and then blame God for letting bad things happen, instead of calling on God as a source of strength.

Fear spoils our life but sometimes it's the only feeling that can motivate us to be brave. When you feel really bad then you can either give in to the snow ball effect of your negative thoughts, or you can use these bad feelings as a motive to get closer to your Lord and Savior. One trick will be to just relax and take time to pray and we let the situation sink in. We should not make any quick decisions that we can't reverse or say anything we can't take back. Once the words are spoken we can't "un-say" them.

This hard time you are facing now might be the only chance you will get to prove to yourself that you are resilient. Those feelings of failure you are experiencing, might be your only chance to prove to yourself that you can become emotionally strong. Hard times and difficult situations urge us to lean upon God for His grace and mercy. As we pray and lean upon Him, we renew our relationship with God. Make use of bad times wisely and you will raise your self-confidence with each big problem you face. We become stronger with each big wave we conquer. We also need to remember that God will never, ever forget about us.

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# Hope's Happenings

Sunday:	January 7	Attendance 85
Offering:	Regular	\$3405.00
	Building	\$30.00
	Sunday School	\$7.00
	Loose	\$50.00
	Well	\$100.00
	Sign	\$70.00
	Youth Group	\$30.00
	Total	\$3692.00

## ANNUAL Report

Please have your reports into Barb by  
Friday, January 19.  
Thank you

### PRAYER CONCERNS: Please remember the following people in your prayers



Brian Asplund—cancer  
Anna—health issues—Ken Schilling's niece  
Bob Kudingo—colon cancer—Rose Schilling's foster brother  
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

## The Bulletin Board

- **Sunday, January 14**
  - Installation of 2018 Council members
- **Tuesday, January 16**
  - 10:00 am Bible Study
- **Wednesday, January 17**
  - 2:00 pm Bible Study
  - 5:15 pm Confirmation
- **Sunday, January 21**
  - Installation of Pastor Mark Reiff. Following the service there will be a potluck dinner in his honor.

(cont. from page 2) And for heaven's sake, forgive yourself, God already has. Forgive yourself for the anger and resentment that you have. Forgive yourself because you made a mistake, and forgive others for not giving you the support you needed at the time. In order to cope with another one of life's hardships we must rely upon God, for He is our rock and solace. How we react to the difficulties of life can be a test to show our faith in God. Yes, life is a series of blips on the radar, but God is in charge and He is a very capable pilot.

Your sister in Christ  
Rosie Schilling

## Hope's Happenings



..... to all who participated in the advent, Christmas and Magi skits. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Also a big thank you to Beth Mueller for being our narrator through out December.



Our January and February mission projects will be collecting items for the Wausau Warming Center and the Salvation Army Transtitional Center Wausau. We will be collecting items both months. If you would like to donate, there is a tub along by the coffee bar. Shopping lists are available on the coffee bar and bulletin board with pictures. Contact Audrey Kamenick @ frontier.com (715-352-2714). Items needed: Instant Oatmeal Packets, Soft Breakfast Bars, Fruit and Applesauce cups, Peanut butter and jelly, Creamer and Sugar, Hand and Foot Warmers. Winter Socks –NEW (Men, Women, Children), Laundry Soap, Cleaning Supplies, Long Underwear (NEW), Hats, Gloves and cereal.



New LWR Quilt and Kit guides are out and set on the table. Please take one to learn more about assembling kits. Also, read how children in Tanzania, from poor families, were so happy to receive School Kits and Personal Care Kits and how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon used the kits also what happened with kits in Haiti when storms came. Any questions see Carol Anderson.



Christian Women Connection Banquet and program has several changes this year:

1. They will meet at the Holiday Inn in Marshfield (708 S Central Ave) not Belvedere.
2. Only 12:30-2:00 pm meetings. NO evening get-togethers.

Info will be on the table in back and on the bulletin board.



### **Please note date change!**

We will be tying blankets on **Sunday, January 28** starting at 1:00 pm. These blankets will be given to the Salvation Army Transitional Center and the Wausau Warming Center. Everyone is welcome.