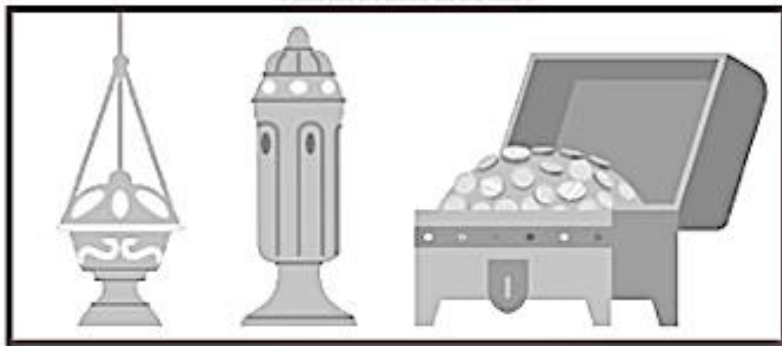


Jesus' Epiphany & Baptism
January 7, 2024



Christ Lutheran Church - St. Catharines, ON

140 Russell Avenue
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1
Church: 905-685-8294
www.christlutheransc.ca

Office Hours: Thursday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon
Bulletin Announcements: Please send to secretary@christlutheransc.ca.
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

Pastor: Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) sr.pastor@christlutheransc.ca
Parish Assistant: Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca
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Secretary: Pat Kimpel secretary@christlutheransc.ca
Facebook: Lisa Gall www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC
Bulletin by email: chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKT19c_OIBbMqGwLw

Prayer: O God, our Maker and Redeemer, who wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature, grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:

Monday: Titus 3: 4-7 Wed.: Luke 4: 16-21 Friday: Josh 1: 1-9
Tuesday: 1 Pet. 4: 12-19 Thurs: Isa. 43: 16-19 Saturday: Jas. 4: 13-17

Musicians: 10 a.m. – Louise Gondosch
Reader: 10 a.m. — Chris Mason
Greeters: 10 a.m. – Ralph & Mary Muller



JANUARY 2024

SUN	SUN	SUN	SUN
7 Epiphany & Jesus' Baptism Baptismal Remembrance Service	14 2 nd Epiphany LSB setting 1 Communion	21 3 rd Epiphany Scripture Service – Praise Band	28 4 th Epiphany. LSB DS setting 4 Communion

EVENTS THIS WEEK:

Today: 9:00 – 9:50 a.m. – Sunday School and Coffee Hour
10:00 a.m. – Baptismal Remembrance Service
Tuesday: 9:30-11:00 a.m. – Precious Moments
Wednesday: 7:30 p.m. – Church Council
Saturday: 4:30 p.m. – Take down Christmas Decorations, then supper at Coppola's Ristorante



YOU ARE INVITED!!
Every Sunday!!
Hope to see you downstairs
for Coffee, Tea & Treats!!
9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.
(during Sunday School & CHAT)
Anyone willing to help serve or bring
treats, please contact:

Judy Mason 905-641-7546

SUNDAY SCHOOL: God leads gentile scholars to worship the Christ. Following their visit, Joseph immediately flees with his young family to the safety of Egypt. When Herod's insane jealousy died with him, the Holy Family returns home to Nazareth. How does God keep us safe today? The Bible verse for today is "O Come let us worship and bow down." Psalm 95:6

PRECIOUS MOMENTS will resume this Tuesday, January 9th from 9:30-11:00am.

CONFIRMAND & YOUTH CHAT will resume in January 14 on the second & fourth Sundays with youth leader Dan Figueroa. We will meet in the youth room during Sunday School from 9 - 9:50 a.m.

VOTERS MEETING: Save the Date! Our next congregational voters meeting will be **Sunday, February 4, 2024**, immediately following Worship Service. Main item for discussion/approval will be the 2024 budget.



Take Down the Tree and Decorations
Saturday, January 13, 4:30 p.m. followed at 6:00 pm by supper
at Coppola's Ristorante, 203 Carlton St.
(Please sign up in the Narthex if you will be attending so we can
make reservations)

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!!

USED STAMPS: Start saving and collecting your used stamps now! They will be gathered at the LWML-C Convention and donated to a charity who will in turn use them to purchase spiritual resources like Bibles.

12th Regular Convention of Lutheran Women’s Missionary League–Canada: July 11-14, 2024, at the Four Points by Sheraton in London, ON.

The convention theme is based on Psalm 149:1 ‘Sing to the Lord a new song’

Keynote Speaker will be Deb Burma who is a Christian author and LWML seminar leader. Special Interest Speakers will also tell of their cross-cultural ministry with the use of singing and music. The mites gathered throughout the past three years provided such great blessings to people around the world, from local support for a Bethlehem Walk in BC to International support of deaconesses in Nicaragua and Cambodia. Rev. Mark Smith will bring news of the work that is happening through those missions. Mission Grants for the next triennium will be voted on.

If you would be interested in attending, either in person or online, speak to Lorraine Kaija.

Registration forms will be available in the coming months. You can also check out the LWML web site lutheranwomen.ca



Please join the Mary Martha/LWML-C on Tuesday, January 16th – 7- 8 p.m. – “Staying Safe Presentation”

Please join us for a presentation by Constable Michael Matwijow and his partner Constable Daryl Landry of the Niagara Regional Police, Community Oriented Response and Engagement unit (CORE). They will be speaking about what they do and the services they provide as well as providing us with information regarding current crime trends in our area and the preventative measures that we can take to reduce the chances of us being victimized. Everyone is welcome to attend!!

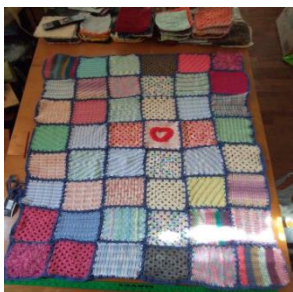
Last Sunday Attendance: Attn: Dec. 30, 2023 — 10 a.m. – 86

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or – (--)</u>
Current	297,841.00	5,840.02	8,210.00	294,253.31	(3,587.69)
LCC Missions	17,000.00	333.33	110.00	17,396.00	396.00
Property Improvement:			65.00	6,965.00	

A MEMORIAL DONATION was given at Christmas to SOUL by Twila Gall in loving memory of her husband, Steve Gall Sr.

2024 DONATION ENVELOPES: Your 2024 donation envelopes are in your mailbox for pick-up! If you do not have a mailbox, please check the table in the Narthex. If you don't have a mailbox, and you would like one, please contact our secretary Pat at secretary@christlutheransc.ca

TECHNOLOGY ENTHUSIASTS – The Worship Committee is seeking individuals who would be interested in learning how to operate the recording equipment used for our worship services. Training will be provided. Should you have any questions or require more information please speak to either Tom Kuhl, Theresa Mason or Pastor Todd.



Granny Squares still needed: This is an ongoing project we will gratefully accept more completed 6 inch knitted or crocheted Granny Squares in any pattern or colour. We would also appreciate any yarn that you may have, leftover yarn or full balls of yarn. In the narthex there is a white cube with yarn and hooks that you are welcome to take (or donate). There is another basket for completed squares. It has been about 6 months that we have been able to show Christ's love in our Caring Squares blankets. (22 blankets to date!) Thank you for donating yarn or completed squares as we continue with this project! Praise

God! If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837)

SERVICE OF BAPTISMAL REMEMBRANCE
"All God's People Sing" Children's hymnal CPH 1992 © St Louis, MO
Epiphany & Baptism of Jesus Christ
January 7, 2024 + 10 AM

FIRST HYMN:

"Gentle Mary"

LSB # 374

**Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the undefiled, to the world a Stranger:
Such a Babe in such a place, can He be the Saviour?
Ask the saved of all the race who have found His favour.**

**Angels sang about His birth; wise men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth, glory all around Him:
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night, all the hills were ringing.**

**Gentle Mary laid her Child lowly in a manger;
He is still the undefiled, but no more a stranger:
Son of God, of humble birth, beautiful the story;
Praise His Name in all the earth, hail the King of glory!**

Words: Joseph Cook, 1859-1933; Music: Good King Wenceslas, 1582 Public Domain

INVOCATION:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

There is one body and one Spirit.

There is one hope in God's call to us.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One God and Father of us all.

As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,

Even so we should walk in the newness of life.

FROM LUTHER'S CATECHISM: – Benefits of Baptism

What is baptism?

Baptism is water used according to God's command and connected with God's promise.

What does baptizing with water show us?

**that the old Adam in us should, by daily sorrow and renewal,
be drowned and die with all sins, and,
a new person daily rises up, living before God in righteousness for all times.**

Psalm 51: 1-12 [in unison]

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**

**For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight,
Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.**

**Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be truly clean.**

**Let me hear joy and gladness; Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.**

**Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with Your free spirit.**

BAPTISMAL HYMN: “All Who Believe And Are Baptized” (2 verses)

**All who believe and are baptized
Shall see the Lord’s salvation;
Baptized into the death of Christ,
They are a new creation.
Through Christ’s redemption they shall stand
Among the glorious, heavenly band
Of every tribe and nation.**

**With one accord, O God, we pray:
Grant us Your Holy Spirit.
Help us in our infirmity
Through Jesus’ blood and merit.
Grant us to grow in grace each day
That by this sacrament we may
Eternal life inherit.**

Thomas Kingo, 1689; public domain

GREETING & PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Hear my prayer, O Lord;

As our heart-felt concerns come before Your throne:

Let us pray: Loving Father, You led the wise men by the shining of a star to adore Jesus Christ, the newborn King, and You anointed Him at His baptism by John in the Jordan River with the Holy Spirit, revealing Him as Your own dear Son, our Saviour. Thank You for making us Your children by water and the Spirit in our baptism. Keep us faithful to You throughout our lives that we bear fruits worthy of our calling as Your witnesses in the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

The Old Testament: *Isaiah 60:1-6*

Epiphany Reading

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord shall rise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. The nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather themselves together; they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried at your side. Then you shall see and be radiant, and your heart shall thrill and rejoice because the abundance of the sea shall be converted to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. The multitude of camels shall cover your *land*, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense and shall bear good news of the praises of the Lord. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: *Acts of the Apostles 19:1-7*

Baptism of Jesus Reading

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE: *"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!"*

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now you hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened Heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

The Holy Gospel: *St. Mark 1:4-11*

Baptism of Jesus Gospel

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Mark, the 1st chapter:

Glory to You, O Lord.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of

Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

BAPTISMAL REMEMBRANCE:

In Holy Baptism our sins are forgiven and we are granted a new life in Christ, our Lord. We solemnly renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways; we confess the gift of faith in God the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So today I ask you anew. Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?

I do renounce them.

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?

Yes, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son?

Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

Yes, I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, and the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body, and the + life everlasting. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

GOSPEL HYMN:

"How Many Kings"

Martel & Germain © 2006

I. Fol - low the star to a place un - ex - pect - ted. _ Would you be - lieve. _
_ af - ter all _ we've pro - ject - ed, a child in a _ man - ger? _
_ Low - ly and small, the weak - est of all, _ un -
_ like - li - est _ he - ro wrapped in His _ moth - er's shawl—just a child. _
_ Is this who we've wait - ed for? _ 'Cause'

how ma - ny — kings stepped down from their — thrones? How ma - ny —
 lords have a - ban - doned their — homes? How ma - ny — greats have
 be - come the least — for me? — And how ma - ny — gods have
 poured out their hearts to ro - mance a world that is torn all a - part? .
 — How ma - ny — fa - thers gave up their sons for me? —

2

— 2. Bring - ing out gifts for the new - born Sav - ior
 all that we have, wheth - er cost - ly or meek, be - cause we be - lieve. —
 — Gold for His hon - or and frank - in - cense for — His
 plea - sure and myrrh for the cross He'll suf - fer. Do you be - lieve? Is
 — D.S. al Coda
 this who we've wait - ed for? —

How ma - ny ___ kings stepped down from their ___
 thrones? How ma - ny ___ lords have a - ban - doned their ___ homes?
 How ma - ny ___ greats have be - come the least? ___ How ma - ny ___ gods have
 poured out their ___ hearts to ro - mance a world that is torn all a -
 -part? ___ How ma - ny ___ fa - thers gave up their sons for me? ___
 ___ On - ly one ___ did that ___ for me. ___

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THE MESSAGE

OFFERING SONG: "As With Gladness"

LSB # 397 VS 1, 4 & 5

**As with gladness, men of old did the guiding star behold;
 As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
 So, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led to Thee.**

**Holy Jesus, ev'ry day keep us in the narrow way;
 And, when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last,
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds Thy Glory hide.**

**In the Heav'nly country bright, need they no created light;
 Thou its light, its joy, its crown, Thou its sun which goes not down.
 There forever may we sing, alleluias to our King.**

Words: William Dix, 1837-1898; Music: DIX, public domain.

PRAYERS

We thank you Heavenly Father for sending your dear Son Jesus to bring the light of life to those who were in darkness and in death's shadow. Help your Church throughout the world to be bold in sharing this good news with all people. May your light shine on our nation's leaders and people so that we may live in peace and justice may prevail.

Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

As the wise men knelt and worshipped the infant Jesus and offered to Him their precious gifts, lead us to join them in their worship and to offer up all we have in service to our Lord.

Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Bless all the baptized, remembering and giving thanks for their Baptism. Thank you for adopting us as brothers and sisters of your dear Son, and for filling us with the same Spirit that descended upon him. Make us radiant with his holiness and lovely with his compassion. Let us glorify you in all we say and do.

Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Put your Spirit upon the leaders of this and every nation. Establish your justice through them throughout the world. Give them the wisdom and the will to protect and provide for their people, especially those who are like "bruised reeds and faintly burning wicks." Make them prefer mercy over might; righteousness over renown; and honesty over hastiness.

Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

We place in your care all who are in trouble. Remember those in need, those who are sick, those who are disabled and especially those who suffer because they bear your name. We bring before You [names added here...] Comfort them with your Holy Spirit, so that in their distress they may accept your fatherly will and rejoice in your saving help.

Heavenly Father: **shine your light on us.**

Into Your hands, Heavenly Father, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, which we have come to know in the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER: ***"Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name..."***

CLOSING BAPTISMAL PRAYER:

Almighty God, we give thanks that Your Son Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins. We celebrate with joy His resurrection from the dead and ascension into Heaven. We are grateful for the work of Your Holy Spirit in us. Which brought us to faith by Baptism. We know that You are faithful in Your covenant with us. Keep us faithful as well. Show us the way You would have us live. In Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour we pray. Amen.

CLOSING GREETING & BLESSING:

By baptism we have been made members of the church, the Body of Christ.

As we live in Him and with His people, we grow in faith, love and walk in newness of life.

Let us now praise the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

The Almighty and merciful God, the Father, Son + and Holy Spirit, bless and keep you now and always. **Amen.**

LAST HYMN:

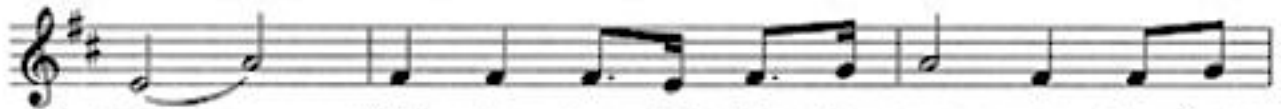
“Shall We Gather At The River”

Acc #470 / CP3 #598

HANSON PLACE



1. Shall we gath - er at the riv - er, Where bright an - gel feet have
2. On the mar - gin of the riv - er, Wash - ing up its sil - ver
3. Ere we reach the shin - ing riv - er, Lay we ev - 'ry bur - den
4. Soon we'll reach the shin - ing riv - er, Soon our pil - grim - age will



1. trod, With its crys - tal tide for - ev - er, Flow - ing
2. spray, We will walk and wor - ship ev - er, All the
3. down; Grace our spir - its will de - liv - er, And pro -
4. cease; Soon our hap - py hearts will quiv - er With the



1. by the throne of God? Yes, we'll gath - er at the riv - er, The
2. hap - py gold - en day.
3. vide a robe and crown.
4. mel - o - dy of peace.



beau - ti - ful, the beau - ti - ful riv - er, Gath - er with the



saints at the riv - er That flows by the throne of God.

Text: B7 #7 with refrain; Revelation 22:1-5. Music: Robert Lowry, 1826-1899.

REV. TODD HOEFFS

Epiphany & Baptism of Jesus

Acts 19:1-7

“Bridge over troubled waters”

January 7, 2024

Mr. Ruff was a tall, thin, well-dressed church member where I served as my 1st call in Edmonton. Wearing a 3 piece suit every Sunday. A WW2 veteran serving as a blacksmith in southern Alberta for army Cavalry in 1939. By the time I was his pastor, He was 89 years old. He was on his 8th pacemaker. When he needed number 9, I visited him in the hospital. His wife of nearly 60 years had already died years prior. Conversing about his deep love and affection for her, Mr Ruff cried tears of love as if she died moments ago. Her beauty, her care, her personality, her love. How he longed to see her in the Heavenly kingdom. We don't let go of those we love, especially spouses and even more-so if we lose a child. This is why the followers of John the Baptizer can't immediately switch their love. John's disciples adhered to him. His abrasive charisma radiates powerfully drawing people to the source of renewal – In the hope of a better messenger, a perfect teacher, a divine Servant. Jesus Christ. Their love and devotion to John will shift to Jesus. All within God's salvation time-frame. John had been dead since 31 AD. Apostle Paul is on his 3rd mission travel to Ephesus around 52 AD. Ephesus is 990 kms away from Jerusalem. Ephesus is a busy seaport in present day Turkey across the Aegean Sea east of Greece. I've been wondering: Why are John the Baptizer's followers not already Christ followers & how did they end up in Ephesus?! Turns out, many Jews fled to any place safe during the dominant & often turbulent reign of Rome. God is also unfolding His great miracle of Epiphany again & again. All nations still seek Jesus. All people are drawn to the Light of Jesus. It's happening again. When Apostle Paul gets to Ephesus after being in Corinth, he teaches daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus [a pagan cultural centre] and creates a church there. Very smart. Share the Gospel by hanging around public venues and in the style of the philosophers lecture people into believing. I know I've gained so many more witnessing opportunities in stores, malls, hospitals, than in regular Christian gathering places. Since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, faith authenticity rests in Jesus & the Spirit. The Spirit keeps us in the faith of Christ -- this is the heart & soul of the church. John the Baptizer even said “there is ONE Who comes that's mightier than I... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”. We also can't assume because John mentioned the Spirit, these believers know about the Spirit. [Just as we assume if an activity is printed once in the bulletin we all read it!] It helps to know that John had been a popular prophet. (If an appetizer is great, why have an unknown entree?) John remained crystal clear to his followers HE IS NOT the messiah. He's an unworthy messenger preparing the way. John didn't invent baptism. Pools for washing away impurities, such as handling blood or contact with skin ailments, existed in John's community and near the Jerusalem Temple. Ritual cleansing before approaching God had long been a part of Jewish life. Washing basins, utensils, even sacrificial offerings. Besides washing, repentance had long been part of Jewish life and faith. Time after time, God led them through oppression by a foreign power until they repent, often at the urging of a prophet. John's message of readiness was the last word 12 of his followers heard. Paul is moving them from John the messenger to Jesus the Saviour; from a water baptism for repentance to a water baptism by the Holy Spirit

and with fire. *Pointing out: "John [was] telling the people to believe in the one who comes after him, that is, in Jesus."* You can't ignore Jesus and adhere to John. You can't have 2 masters. You can't say you're a Christian and live a life where the Light of Jesus doesn't show. Loyalties connected to faith are hard to break. How easy is it believing those lies than the hard truth. We have favourite politicians. Beloved teachers. The only pastor you ever known and ever liked. Favoured child or parent – "mom always liked you best". We all have preferences. But there can be no other god in place of Jesus. When we allow our preferences to become words or actions, it can be damaging, Even divisive [which Paul had in his churches] We get an idea set in our minds or trust an inner feeling & unless someone says the narrative we've woven in our heads, we put our back up immediately. My same Edmonton Parish, A new candidate 25 years old. Had a pastor they adored 28 years. New pastor came for 5 years – they HATED. Drained the church of 300 to 40 My 1st Voters meeting. People sat on opposing sides of the room with arms folded. Visible Division. Support one of the other – us vs them. Deadly. Took 10 of my 12 years to dismantle the toxic environment. It would be splendid creating quick unity but, like all relationships, Real true lasting unity takes time and patience and prayer and communication. Because God is the creator of unity. Christ died on the cross alone to bring us all together. Apostle Paul can't in good conscience allow disunity in the Lord's new church. Disagreements are healthy and common; what is deadly is how those get settled. Disagreement need not become disrespectful nor abusive. When it becomes all about what a few want as opposed to what the Lord wants. This is selfish and unhealthy, and repentance then is needed to help us live out Our calling as followers of Christ. Its very unwise fighting against the Spirit, thinking any of us know better -- rather filled with the Spirit we can trusting the change and growth will come. That creates a healthy church life. This brings new health to John's 12 followers. So Paul baptizes them in the name of the Lord Jesus, lays hands on them And they receive the Holy Spirit. All taking place about 19 years after the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit is actively working & their response is immediate. The gift of faith inspires tongues and prophecy. Tongues here is speaking in a heavenly dialect not known to the hearers; And in worship setting they usually have another person as an interpreter witness. Prophecy here is truth telling, sharing the faith in Christ, validating the work of the Spirit as peace inspires justice. Tongues and prophecy might seem odd to us, 2000 plus years later. We're skeptical at times of these in our day. Lutherans historically have discounted tongues and prophecy. True, the visibility of the Holy Spirit might not always be in front of us -- Yet God allows access to this in every age and will offer this gift when and if any believer needs it. He always gives us what we need at the right time and place.

[Story? Glenda – saw angels fly around my head as I consecrated Communion.] All believers in Christ have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – and there are many gifts. Tongues and prophecy are but two [teaching, encouraging, evangelizing...The true test of faith we see and hear throughout Scripture is Loving God, loving your neighbour as yourself, grace through faith, All prompted by the Holy Spirit. This comes into our hearts by grace in Baptism -- Giving us access to use of whatever gifts and talents we've been given to witness to what God has done in Christ. Baptize and teach. Jesus says this. Apostle Paul is doing it. John is fine, his baptism had its day and purpose. Jesus Himself gets baptized and makes our baptism the direct avenue for forgiveness, new life and faith. When Jesus steps into our world as a person like us He makes us worthy vessels of the Spirit. Makes us worthy to wear the cross He will have to die upon.

He will suffer and die alone to ensure we are never alone. This is why the Spirit comes down to Jesus when He is baptized. His Father and Spirit remain with Him, as the living Trinity on earth. This is why God's validates His well-pleasing Son with a heavenly voice.

This validates not only Apostle Paul's baptism -- It also validates every church's baptism all these centuries later. By allowing the hands of Christ to be laid upon us once again, the church can speak with a new tongue in our daily mission to show the love of Christ in the world. We may not always see such immediate Spirit driven activity among us.

It may look different. It may look absent at times. It may look lonely or isolated or in chaos. It may mean less of our own desires and more listening and caring.

More interest in the community or a stranger or person in need of a kind word.

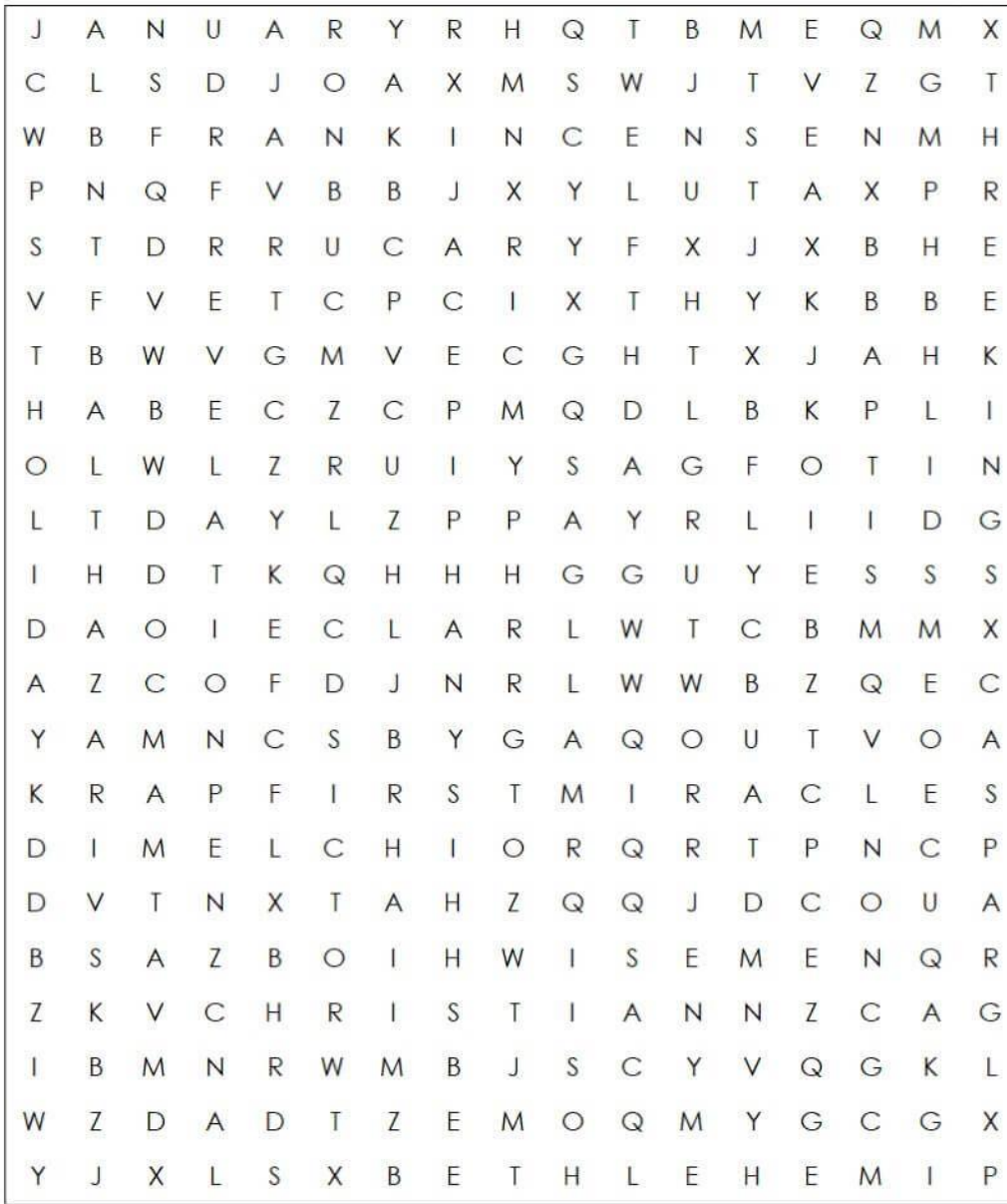
God is divinely shifting our preferences and wants to an embracing of the present moments of mercy here, now.

Embracing everything the Gospel of Jesus is – Caring less for what was
And caring more for what is – Jesus and His Spirit.

Amen.

Name: _____

Epiphany Word Search



- | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------|
| FIRST MIRACLE | REVELATION | MELCHIOR |
| FRANKINCENSE | BALTHAZAR | BAPTISM |
| WISE MEN | BETHLEHEM | HOLIDAY |
| THREE KINGS | CHRISTIAN | JANUARY |
| TWELFTH DAY | EPIPHANY | CASPAR |

