

The Shepherd's *staff*

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH
EPIPHANY / NEW YEAR 2022 — ORINDA, CALIFORNIA

Christmas Wrap-Up

Diana Riveness Young (Council Liaison for Worship, Music and Arts)

Christmas 2021 is now in the rear-view mirror, but we'd be remiss were we not to say 'Thank You!' to those many folks who helped make sure that those celebrations happened.

Thanks to the Members and Friends of our Altar Guild! Wow! You folks seem to have Sanctuary Decorating down to a science! Not even that way-scaled-back pandemic version last year slowed your groove. The 'Hanging of the Greens' Party on December 5th was an unscripted but well-choreographed production and things got done in record speed! Thanks to all of you who came out and helped out, and an extra special word of thanks to our cooks who helped make the 'after-party / chili supper' happen! Yummy!

Thanks to Our Outdoor Decorators Too! A chorus of 'I'm gonna let it shine' seems an appropriate acknowledgement of those folks who helped ensure that our outdoor lighting and signage were up and working as a reminder to the whole community to keep Christ in Christmas. The lights in the tree(s) are a 'can't be missed' sign for all who travel up and down Moraga Way!

Thanks to Our Worship Teams It was WONDERFUL to have some 'mid-sized' worship teams leading our special worship services this year. After last year's 'small-group-only' approach during the heart of the pandemic, it was a JOY to have more voices and smiling faces in worship leadership roles. Thanks to Joe, Tom, Steve, Bob, Ed, Pastor John, Bethany, Elizabeth, Gretchen, Sharon, Marci and Pastor Pam for stepping up during one or more of those services! And thanks to Julie Hamre and Marc Levine for being the glue that held it all together! (I love getting to sing with these folks voices in my ear again!) Won't it be wonderful when ALL our choir members are again able to join the singing??

And Thanks to Our Pastors Too! Pastor John and Pastor Pam experience 'crunch time' at Christmas every year, but this year they seemed to go 'above and beyond'. Betwixt service planning and bulletin publications, sermons and singing, their plates were/are certainly full! Thank you, pastors!

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EVENTS SCHEDULE

We encourage you to join in the following events — virtually and/or in-person:

Every Sunday at 9:30 am — Our weekly in-person worship opportunity in our Sanctuary!

Every Sunday at 9:30 am — Our in-person worship services are "Live-Streamed" via Facebook @HSLCORinda.

Every Sunday at 10:30 am — Coffee Fellowship time takes place following our in-person worship service.

Every Sunday at noon — A recording of our weekly 'Worship Video' should be accessible via our webpage at www.holyshepherd.org or our Facebook page @HSLCORinda.

Third Sundays from 10:30a to 11:15a — Following morning worship on the third Sunday of each month, our Sanctuary is open for socially-distanced Holy Communion. (*Join us on January 16th!*)

Tuesdays at 7pm — Pastor John and/or Pastor Pam lead "Adult Ed" — a Zoom-based online fellowship opportunity. The Zoom Meeting ID# is 861 5874 8710 and the Password is 94563. (Adult Ed. resumes on January 11!)

Social Ministry Update:

International Health Partners (IHP)

Most every month, we receive a handwritten note from IHP's Managing Director, Paula Lofstrom. Her most-recent missive — dated December 20, 2021 — reports as follows.

Dear Friends at Holy Shepherd,

Your whopping donation of \$900 earlier this month for the mission of IHP is doing great things for the people we serve at Zinga. Thank you!

The construction crew has cut the windows and doors into the shipping container that is the back of the Maternal & Child Health Center. It will become 3 exam room for doing prenatal & well-baby checkups. The side rooms are for admin & counseling & one for the chaplain's office. The open area in the center is for classes in parenting, nutrition, HIV/AIDS education & for community health screenings for diabetes, blood pressure, typhoid prevention, etc.



Baby Amina (pictured left) was born at 36 wks. At one-month-old, she weighs 4 1/2 lbs., has microcephaly & weak reflexes & a fever. Her diagnosis was sepsis of prematurity (probably the mother had an intrauterine infection causing premature birth.) Dr. Kitundu started Amina on 10 days of a broad spectrum antibiotic & within 5 days she was notably improved.

Blessings and gratitude always— and a very Merry Christmas!

Paula and Denny!



International Health Partners seeks to improve health care for the people of Tanzania (East Africa) by integrating medical knowledge, techniques, and best practices within the East African culture. They employ and train local health care professionals and rely on the generosity of others to build resource efficient facilities without sacrificing care for their patients.

In 2021, Holy Shepherd contributed \$3449 to the work of International Health Partners through the "Giving Beyond Ourselves" portion of our budget and an additional \$3450 in direct support gifts! IHP is most appreciative of our faithful support of their mission!

JANUARY



Birthdays

5th Devon She.	19th Craig Wil.
9th Pete Schm.	20th Matt Val.
10th Chuck Pat.	21st Mary Doc.
11th Ellin Swa.	22nd Otto Tsch.
12th Arwin Chu.	25th Elaine Nie.
15th Sharon Tis.	28th Nina Ber.
18th Cindy Kum.	30th Scott Gar.
19th Alexandra Dem.	<u>Anniversaries</u>
19th Chris Mer.	5th Rose-Kalvass (18)

Anniversaries

OUR MONTHLY PRAYER CONCERNS FOR JANUARY

For Healing/Strength

Gloria & Bert E.
DoLoris & Doug T.
MaryHelene W.
Dr. Bob & Carole W.
Suzi M.
Judy B.
Diana N.
Pete & Zach Schm.
Cristi Ch.

For Peace/Comfort

Harry H.
Rolf B.
Donna G.
Carol K.
Bob & Kristi L.
Marian McG.
DeLane R.
Marilyn N.
Igor & Rita S.

For Those Serving

Meghan H.
Brian H.
Peter K.



New To Our Community



We rejoice with Claire and Craig Wildman at the arrival of Martin Sterry Wildman on December 2nd! We're happy to report that both Claire and Martin are doing well, and that Martin was 7lbs 13oz upon arrival. (It would appear from the attached photo that big brother Peter is quite taken with Martin, while younger brother Joey is having second thoughts.)



COVID Update

The New Year seemed to hold such promise! We were looking forward to resuming fuller participation in our choirs, returning to in-person educational programming and pastoral visitations, and (finally) being able to share Holy Communion on a weekly basis in the context of our worship services. But then the Omicron variant arrived and it feels like we're back to Square One.

On December 29, 2021, Contra Costa Health Services issued a health order requiring everyone to mask in all indoor public settings, regardless of vaccination / booster status. While there is a noted masking exemption for "performers at indoor live events" (including our Sunday morning worship leaders) and an exemption from the masking requirement "to the extent that removal of face coverings is necessary for participation in a religious activity", we will continue to insist that all worshippers be masked in our worship space. Additionally, we will necessarily renew limits on the number of worship leaders we have at a given service.

But take heart! By continuing to wear our masks, by conscientiously practicing social-distancing, by being patient with local health restrictions, we may yet aid those whom God would call 'our neighbors'. For — as Doctor Luther was fond of saying — "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does."

Christmas 'Thank You's from Our Pastors

Bethany and I are both humbled and grateful by the plentiful gifts you shared with us as part of this year's "Gifts for the Pastors" campaign. You never cease to amaze us with your generosity. You never cease to amaze us with your spirit of partnership. You never cease to amaze us with your support and love! To echo the words of that anonymous veteran of our nation's Civil War, "I am, among all men, most richly blessed."

Love, joy and peace! Pastor John

Thank you so much for your generous Christmas gift. I am grateful for all of you and for our partnership in the Gospel. You are on my daily gratitude list. The way you live the Gospel, and the way you share your love of Jesus, is inspiring. "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you." (Philippians 1:3-4)

With love and gratitude, Pastor Pam

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Our ushers report that there were 46 worshippers at our 4pm Christmas Eve service and 62 at the 6pm one. And Pastor John further noted that 77 people accessed our service through our Facebook Live / Facebook page (including 29 'full-engagements'). It's a beautiful reminder that — while in-person worship numbers are down due to the continuing pandemic — people ARE finding ways to worship God with us! And that makes my heart sing!

In Christ's service,
Diana Riveness Young

A Word from Pastor John



A number of years ago now, I asked our Confirmation students what they'd received for Christmas. I quickly learned that — that particular year — video games and Uggs boots were hot, while sweaters were most definitely not. But then I turned the tables on them and asked the question, "What did you GIVE for Christmas this year?"

You would have thought I'd just been revealed to be "He who must not be named." Abject silence filled the room. Some couldn't remember because their parents had taken care of all the shopping. Some couldn't remember because they hadn't taken time to gift at all. Some just plain couldn't remember. But then one young man confessed "I got my dad a carafe for his coffee pot." (To which a number of his colleagues openly wondered what kind of a gift a coffee carafe was.) In time, we learned that the young man had broken the coffee carafe while doing the dishes a couple of weeks before, and so he'd gone out and bought a replacement and wrapped it up and put it under the tree.

My unvoiced initial response to that account was "What kind of a gift is that? A replacement for something you'd broke??" But I came to realize that it was a pretty excellent gift after all. The young fellow had taken the time to think about it, he'd taken the time to own up to his error, he'd gone out of his way to track down the proper replacement. What he'd really given his dad that Christmas was the most precious gift he could give — the gift of a piece of himself.

If Christmas is a time to think about the gifts we get, perhaps Epiphany (those days on the church calendar between Christmas and Lent) is a time for us to think about gifts WE give. Our models through the days of Epiphany are the Magi, the so-called "wisemen", who came from far away to offer their gifts to the baby Jesus and his parents. The gifts that they gave the baby were curious to say the least — gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Typical university-types, giving gifts like that instead of diapers and blankets and some much-needed food!) But if you look at that story closely, you may notice that the wisemen gave Jesus what THEY perceived as valuable. Moved by their encounter with the baby, they offered him what they had with them that was valuable to THEM.

The story of Epiphany begs of us a question. It invites us to ask "What do we have to offer? What do we treasure that WE might give to the Lord?" Worship means opening up our treasure chests and offering to Jesus whatever we have locked away in there — be it our time, our pride, our resources, or maybe a grudge long held or a cherished but addictive behavior. The wisemen opened their treasure chests and gave Jesus a piece of themselves. Ought not we think about doing the same? After all, giving of themselves is what wise folks do!

This and That

- ♦ Janine Crowe has developed a daily devotional mailing that she is happy to share with the women of our congregation and community. It shows up in your email in-box each morning and has a snippet of Scripture, a devotional thought, some prayer suggestions and an occasional musical reflection. If you'd like to be added to Janine's daily mail list, please drop her a line at jlcrowe@sbcglobal.net.
- ♦ Dungeness Crab is once again available in the Bay Area and Cristi Chow is putting together ('plotting'??) a safe/socially-distanced crab feed as a way to support our community-ministry partners! All proceeds will be used for facilities improvements for Holy Shepherd Christian Preschool and the Lamorinda Adult Respite Center. If you'd be willing to put your energies into this fun and friendly effort, please contact Cristi at hslccristi@gmail.com.
- ♦ The Women's Book Club has resumed meeting on a monthly basis to encourage one another to read, to relax and to expand their horizons. On Saturday, January 8th the group will meet to review A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles at 10:00am in the Center for Ministry building. The February read is The Last Thing He Told Me by Laura Dave, slated for February 5.
- ♦ After a couple of unexpected technological hiccups, the new "New Testament 101" Bible/book study is kicking off. This study group — led by Pastor John — will be utilizing N.T. Wright's hefty The New Testament in Its World as a conversation guide to better understand the history, literature and theology of the first Christians. "New Testament 101" will meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7pm and can be accessed by in-person and via Zoom. For more information, contact Bob Bauer at bobjbauer@att.net.

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