

Joyful Noise!

A monthly column
with all the noise
that is news about
Music & Worship at
St. John Lutheran
Church

Volume 2, Issue 4

January 2001

The Light SHINES in the darkness

I love dark, dreary December days! I even love the SOUND of that phrase: **Dark, dreary December days!** Why? Because I really love the lights of Christmas, and in the darkness, they REALLY SHINE!. As the old carol says, "It's the MOST WONDERFUL time of the year." Think about it. Imagine what life is like for all those poor souls living south of the Equator. For them, Christmas comes during SUMMER, when days are long and skies are clear.

I believe the darkness helps us experience the JOY of the season. The scriptures tell us, "The people who walked in DARKNESS have seen a GREAT LIGHT." It seems only proper that we celebrate Christmas during this dark, dreary season. The visualization of the darkness would certainly be lost if Christmas were celebrated in summer. As much as people often complain about the darkness, we all USE it to our advantage. We spend uncountable dollars decorating our homes, yards, and churches with lights. White lights, colored lights, big lights, small lights, spot lights, Twinkie lights, ice lights, swag lights, running lights, dancing lights. One of Illinois' biggest holiday celebrations is the East Peoria "Festival of LIGHTS". Would we

go to all this effort if the sun didn't set until 9:00 each night, like it does in June?

The darkness accentuates the coming of the light. Christ IS the LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Christ came at Christmas, and we "people who walked in darkness" have SEEN the light. You're probably reading this and asking "WHY is he writing about Christmas now? Christmas is OVER – this is the JANUARY Jottings."

Yes, the 12 days of Christmas ended on Epiphany, January 6th. Now we, "the people who walked in darkness" are encouraged to LET OUR LIGHTS SHINE in the darkness of January and February.

Epiphany is the "Season of light". Epiphany is "A Christian feast celebrating the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi." (*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 3rd Edition* copyright © 1992) Like the Wise Men, we are called to worship Jesus. Now that we know who He is, how do we react? The Old Testament reading for January 6th tells us: "Arise, shine, for your light has come" Isaiah 60:1 (NIV). So, between now and Ash Wednesday, don't let the dark dreary days of winter pull you down into the depths of cabin

fever and seasonal depression. The LIGHT of CHRIST invites us to SHINE in the darkness. WE are to be lights in the world!

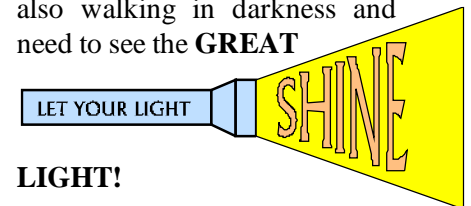
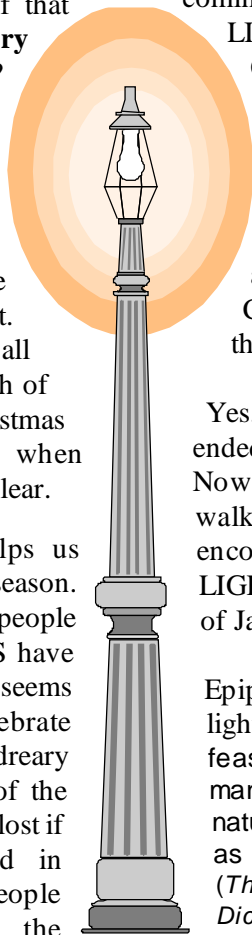
Why not USE the darkness to your advantage. In summer, when days are long, it's easy to get preoccupied with our own amusements: gardening, sports, recreation, vacations, and other such things. In this time of darkness, we can take time to reflect the light. There's no grass to mow, no garden to weed, and not much snow to shovel, so why not focus your energy (your LIGHT) on the GREAT LIGHT, Christ and his church?

Use your Christmas gift certificates to buy a home Bible Study guide or devotional, or, maybe a new translation of the Bible or a CD of your favorite Christian music. Consider having a short family devotion each night after supper or before bed. Make a list of ways YOU can be a LIGHT to the world. Volunteer to help at church. Join a Sunday School class or Bible Study, offer to teach or substitute teach a Sunday School class, JOIN THE CHOIR, sew a quilt, cook a meal, provide food for the pantry, and, most importantly, COME TO WORSHIP! INVITE YOUR FRIENDS. Remember, THEY are also walking in darkness and need to see the GREAT

LET YOUR LIGHT

SHINE

LIGHT!



Meet the Choir

Last year, I introduced each member of Worship Committee. Now, I'd like you to meet our dedicated singers in the Gospel Choir. We'll start with two of our dedicated sopranos. Sopranos sing the "high notes"; not just the melody, but the high descants that really make choir anthems joyful.



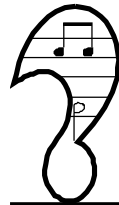
Sharon Resler is a life-long member of St. John who joined choir in 1975. She sang in school choirs at Monroe and Limestone, and sang with a Gospel Music choir started by the Peoria Christian Center until the group dissolved in the mid 1980's. Sharon is single, works at Toys R Us and H&R Block, and lives with her sister on Peoria's north side. She enjoys Contemporary Christian music, along with Country Western, "Oldies", and (her favorite style) Easy Listening. Her radio is usually tuned to 106.9 FM. Sharon not only sings in the choir, she keeps us organized by assigning robes and working with her sister and Betty Smith as our music librarians.



Joan Resler, also a life-long member of St. John, has sung with choir for about 3 years. Joan has worked at Cub Foods for 14 years and lives in

Bartonville. Her favorite music is Modern Rock, but she also listens to Contemporary Christian, "Oldies", show tunes, and Easy Listening. Her radio is usually dialed to 106.9. Joan is part of the most-valuable choir-

librarian trio who sort, file, and find music whenever we need it.



Can anybody join the choir?

NO! In order to qualify as a member of our esteemed choir, you must first pass a rigid entrance exam:

- 1 Can you carry a tune in a bucket?
- 2 Do you enjoy trying?
- 3 Will you come to rehearsals Monday nights (7 - 8:30) as often as possible?
- 4 Will you try to be with us as often as possible when we are scheduled to sing? (roughly 3 out of 5 Sundays, September through mid-May, and all holy days: Christmas, Easter, Ash Wednesday, etc.)

If you answered **YES** to these questions, **YOU QUALIFY!** You do NOT have to be able to read music (although it HELPS if you can). You will NOT be asked to sing a solo unless you WISH to be

THE BACK PEW - By Jeff Larson



Yes, they saw the star. Yes, they followed it to Jesus, BUT, it took much longer than anticipated because despite being 3 Wiseman, they were still "MEN", and refused to stop and ask for directions.

so considered. We are just a friendly group of Christians who enjoy making a Joyful Noise. We sing all types of music, from light classics to modern gospel, and we'd LOVE to have you join us. Now is a GOOD time to join, as we will soon be preparing for Lent and Easter.

In the bleak mid-winter

The "old red" Lutheran Hymnals (the ones we used BEFORE the Green LBWs) contained an old Christmas Carol titled "*In the Bleak Midwinter.*" Unfortunately, that song is not in LBW or *With One Voice*. To me, it's haunting message is one of the most beautiful of the winter season. It's usually listed as a Christmas hymn, but the final verse sets the stage for Epiphany, reminding us that even though we may not be rich like the Wise Men, each of us has gifts we can offer to the King of Kings. As you contemplate ways to "Let your light shine" in these dark, dreary winter days, remember these words:

*What can I give Him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him:
Give my heart.*

Until Next Month:

Remember "*You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*"

Matt 5:14,16 (NIV)

*Soli Deo Gloria
(To God alone be the Glory)*

Donald L. Bauer

Choral & Contemporary Music Director