


THE MESSENGER

Vermont Lutheran Church's Mission Statement:

Christians **A**ctively **R**eaching Out **E**xperiencing Christ and **S**preading His Word

From the Interim Pastor's Desk . .



Pastor Rebecca will begin to briefly answer the submitted questions "Ask me anything....about the Bible!" Some of the questions may require months of newsletters articles and a 250 page essay to answer, but she will do her best to answer them in two pages or less. If you would like to discuss a question in person, please visit her at during office hours. Please remember some of the topics covered may be sensitive to some individuals and you may have a different perspective on it, but this forum is to get the Pastor's reflection on the question.

Having evaluated the number of questions in the *Ask the Pastor Anything* box, I find it will be necessary to answer two questions each month, or it will take several years to get through them all. If you don't see your question, fear not. I will eventually answer every question in the box to the best of my ability.

Question number one.

Judas must have had redeeming qualities if Jesus chose him to be one of the twelve. Could you address this?

To answer this question, we need to back up a bit.

Three of the gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke bear a strong resemblance to one other. For example, 90% of the gospel of Mark appears verbatim in the gospel of Matthew. All three gospels share the same take on the Christ event. Bear in mind that the gospel of John is a different story. It stands alone. Its portrayal of Judas is unlike the portrayal of Matthew, Mark, and

Inside this issue

Pastor's Message.....	1-3
Highlights.....	4-5
News.....	6-7
Readings/Birthdays.....	8
Council, Committees & Teams.....	9
Synod.....	10-11
Prayers, Legacy.....	12

Luke. I will leave John's portrayal of Judas aside, or this answer will take up the entire *Messenger*.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke were trying to feed their readers something that would be nearly impossible for them to digest -- namely, the centrality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to the Christian proclamation. We take the centrality of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ to the Christian proclamation for granted. After all, it's been in the bloodstream of western culture for two millennia. In its original unfolding no one was having it. Take a step back. It's hardly self-evident that an ignominious death on a cross -- a punishment reserved mostly for slaves -- was a vicarious atonement for human sin. In fact, it was utterly incomprehensible. It was downright offensive.

The gospel writers determined that the best defense was a good offense. Mark's gospel has been described as a crucifixion account with a brief preface. And the crucifixions accounts are eye-witness historical accounts. There are two eye-witness accounts in the Bible -- one concerning King David and the crucifixion accounts. An eye-witness historical account of the crucifixion does not exactly soft peddle it.

Accordingly, the disciples in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are depicted as those struggling to comprehend the necessity and meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They represent the resistance the gospels' readers would mount toward it.

Enter Judas. Judas was a zealot. Zealots were the ancient equivalent of present-day terrorists. They fought to free their homeland from Roman occupation, but being relatively powerless, they resorted to terror tactics. They were nationalist extremists whose ultimate aim was to revive the nation of Israel.

Judas mistook Jesus as a man cut from his same cloth. With his miraculous powers, Jesus, Judas hoped, would end Roman occupation and revive the nation of Israel. When Jesus entered Jerusalem at the time of the Passover after the fashion of a latter-day King David, Judas thought the time was at hand. But when Jesus did not get on with it, when Jesus instead imparted with increasing urgency that his death was nigh, Judas realized his mistake. He had backed the wrong man. Judas wanted the spotlight off of Jesus and onto the aims of zealotry. So, he betrayed Jesus to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver. He never thought his actions would launch a chain of events that would end in Jesus' death. When he discovered what he had put in motion, he repented of his actions and naively thought he could halt it by returning the thirty pieces of silver. When Jesus' enemies sneered at him for effort, he could not bear to witness the thing play out and hung himself.

Did Judas have redeeming qualities? He was certainly no worse than the other disciples. More tragic, perhaps, but no worse. It is wrong that he has been singled out as some despicable monster. But according to God's mystery, Judas helped the gospel writers convey who Jesus was and who Jesus wasn't. He wasn't a zealot or a nationalist of any stripe. He was the Son of God who came to make a vicarious atonement for human sin on his cross.

NEWS (continued)

Question number two.

What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

The short answer is: Almost nothing.

In over two thousand pages and over the course of more than two thousand years, the Bible addresses itself to homosexuality all of five times. It would be as though from the Roman Empire to the present day, western culture addressed itself to a topic five times. What's more, Jesus had nothing to say on the matter.

Of the five references, two are from the book of Leviticus. (Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13). Both state that homosexuality is an "abomination," In Hebrew the word "abomination" (toebah) is used to describe forms of worship that were idolatrous and were therefore not to be practiced.

To say more, the religion of Israel arose out of a pervasively pagan context. All the competing religions believed that the gods dwelled in the forces of nature. Religion was about placating these gods in order to manipulate the forces of nature. Sacred prostitution and homosexual rites were thought by pagans to enhance nature's fertility so they were pagan religious practices. What Leviticus was stating was that the people of Israel were not to worship their God through sexual activity as the competing paganisms did.

That leaves three more references -- all by Paul. (Romans 1:26-27, I Corinthians 6:9-11, I Timothy 1:9-10). In Romans, Paul states that homosexuality was what benighted Gentiles practiced. In I Corinthians and I Timothy, he states that it reflected wrongdoing. Although few could withstand Paul's scrutiny. By comparison, he states fifteen times that fornication (all sexual activity outside of marriage) reflected wrong-doing. He also stated that those who experience jealousy or anger or those who get drunk have no place in the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:21-22) And then there's that piece about women keeping silent in church. (I Corinthians 14:33-36)

One of the beauties of Lutheranism is that every individual is governed by the dictates of his own conscience. Ironically, he got this from Paul, "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12)

Rev. Rebecca Clancy

HIGHLIGHTS (continued)



Christmas breakfast at base camp....also we raised \$150 in tip money for the food pantry...Mary Beth said that was good with her!!! Gaila



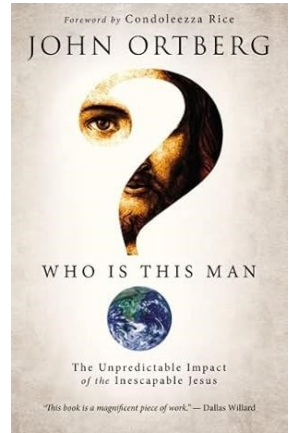
HIGHLIGHTS (continued)



NEWS

BOOK CLUB BEGINNING

Looking for something to do this winter season. Let's read a book! The first selection will be *Who Is This Man?: The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus*



Have it read by our zoom meeting on February 15, 6:30pm-7:30pm.

The day after Jesus' death, whatever small mark he made on the world seemed destined to disappear. Instead, his impact on human history has been unparalleled, leading believers and nonbelievers alike to ask, *Who Is This Man?*

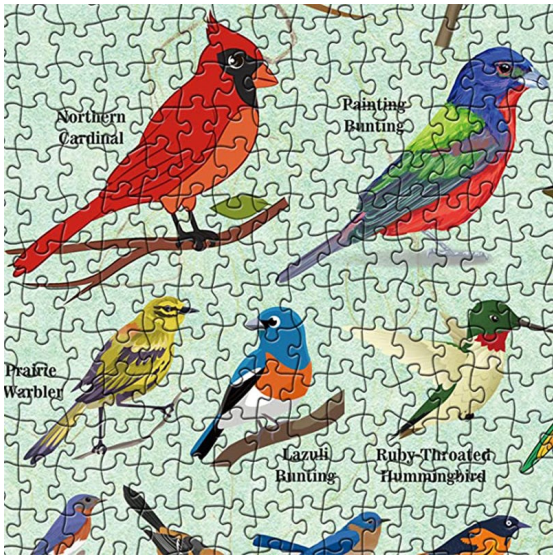
In *Who Is This Man*, bestselling author John Ortberg explores the paradox of Jesus, history's most familiar figure while simultaneously the man no one knows. *Who Is This Man* traces Jesus' incredible life and legacy from his days on Earth to the present moment, showing us:

- How his vision of life continues to haunt and challenge humanity

January Jigsaw Puzzle Library Update

We have some exciting news to start the New Year. Adam Clancy has joined me in managing the Jigsaw Puzzle Library!

FOR JANUARY We are Highlighting



BIRD PUZZLES

DISNEY PUZZLES

COUNTRYSIDE PUZZLES

We have a lot of other puzzles to choose from too!

We recommend adding a little background music and a warm cup of cocoa as you piece the puzzle together!

We do NEED more Children's Puzzles. . .and, of course, any puzzles that you find in your closet or you have just finished!

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to ask

Adam or Klover, Co-Librarians.

****Remember: Donated and Puzzle Returns go into the gray bucket****

Christmas "Hats & Mittens" Program Final Tally

Our Christmas Collection of "Hats and Mittens" was completed on Sunday, December 10. In all, we collected 44 hats and 43 pairs of gloves for a grand total of 87. The hats and gloves have been divided and were distributed this week to Wisconsin Heights School, Heights Unlimited Pantry and Luke House in time for the cold January winter! Thank you very much for your support in warming the heads and hands and hearts of so many local neighbors.





CABIN FEVER RELIEVER

BELGIAN CANALS TRAVELOGUE

7 - 8 PM, Sunday, January 28th

AT THE VERMONT CHURCH GATHERING PLACE



Jon and Judy Urness cruised the Gent-Oostende Canal in Belgium this past September on a self-piloted adventure with sisters Edie and Melissa and their husbands. It required a little seamanship but resulted in an incredible experience with visits to the medieval cities of Gent and Bruge. Along the way they enjoyed a pastoral 8-knot boat cruise through dozens of draw bridges and locks. Local dairy farms, tiny villages and pleasant scenery lined the centuries-old canals.

All are welcome to hear the whole story with a complete slide-show in the first of this year's *Cabin Fever Reliever* travel series. Popcorn and light refreshments will be available for your enjoyment.

.....
All committee and teams need to submit a summary of the 2023 year to the church office by January 2nd, 2024 to be place in the annual packet for the Annual Congregational Meeting.

SUBMIT YOUR
REPORTS

A graphic consisting of the words "SUBMIT YOUR" in a light blue, sans-serif font above the word "REPORTS" in a larger, bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. The letter "O" in "REPORTS" is replaced by a colorful pie chart with four segments: blue, purple, green, and red.



January 7

Topic and Title: The Night Sky

Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

January 14

Topic and Title: The Baptism of Christ

I Samuel 17:42-46

Romans 8:26-30

John 1:19-31

January 21

Topic and Title: The Adulteress

Deuteronomy 15:10-11

Romans 12:1-3

John 8:1-11

January 28

Title: The Equipped

Topic: God aids those whom he calls

Exodus 3:1-11

Galatians 6:7-10

Luke 5:1-11

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Jane	Mickelson	January 01
Henry	Olsen	January 01
Jude	Powers-Orth	January 03
Cora	Hanson	January 06
Susan	Schaub	January 08
Richard	Johnson	January 14
Cara	Boebel	January 16
Joanie	Haugen	January 20
Ashlee	Adler	January 22
Janice	Cowan	January 23
Angela	Humphrey	January 23
Candy	Severson	January 23
Amanda	Hefty	January 24
Reed	Adler	January 26
Jane	Field	January 27
Jamie	Hallick	January 27
Gregory	Herrling	January 28
Kristin	Antonie	January 31



COUNCIL/COMMITTEES/TEAM NEWS

BEGINNING IN 2024

Council, Committee and Team Meeting Minutes will no longer be published in our newsletter, *The Messenger*. These will be e-mailed to members and when our new website is up and running, they will be available in the Members Only section on our website. Minutes will no longer be published in the Messenger.

.....

Vermont Lutheran Annual Congregation Meeting

Sunday
February 4th, 2024
10:30am

All Vermont Lutheran Members Your attendance is requested.

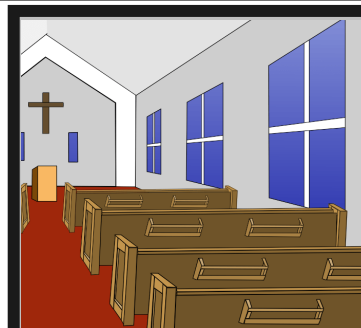
The purpose of the annual meeting is to conduct the official business for the year. Members will read minutes, make and receive reports, vote on the budget and elect new officers and/or council members.

Monthly Financial Report						
December 2023						
	Contributions			Operating Expenses		
	2023	2022	Change	2023	2022	Change
Monthly	\$ 41,700	\$ 26,628	\$ 15,072	\$ 17,914	\$ 24,237	\$ (6,323)
YTD	\$ 177,651	\$ 161,496	\$ 16,155	\$ 177,800	\$ 152,665	\$ 25,135



Bonnie Dauck & Sue Schaub

JANUARY
ALTAR GUILD



Attendance	
December 2023	
3rd	83
10th	120
17th	63
24th	177
31st	60

Synod News

LEAD 2024 - February 17 - Register Today!

LEAD 2024 will be held on Saturday, February 17, at St. John's Lutheran Church (100 Oak St., Prairie du Sac, WI) from 9:30am to 3:30pm.

LEAD is an annual event presented by the synod for rostered and lay leaders to gather for worship, learning, and fellowship.

Click the button below to view the LEAD page on the synod website, and to register.



[Register for LEAD 2024](#)

Be a Faithful Innovation Learning Community!



2024 Faithful Innovation Learning Communities are forming now!

Participating congregations will discern their unique answer to this question: **“As we listen to God, one another, and our neighbors, what future do we imagine God is bringing forth in our midst?”**

“The answer needs to come from Christ and our willingness to ask hard questions and listen for answers, as well as our ability to take risks, secure in our standing in Christ.

Click [here](#) to view an email sent on December 20 with all of the details, or click the button below to download an informational flyer.

If your congregation would like to participate, or if you have any questions about Faithful Innovation Learning Communities, contact the Rev. Walter Baires, Associate to the Bishop and Director of Evangelical Mission at walterb@scsw-elca.org.

[Learn More about Faithful Innovation](#)

All About Solar Panels Zoom Webinar - January 18



Want to Go Solar in 2024?

The synod Care for God's Creation team will host a zoom meeting on **Thursday, January 18, from 6:30pm to 8pm for congregations interested in installing solar panels at their church.**

People from congregations who have recently installed solar systems will lead the Zoom meeting and will provide helpful information and resources.

Recently submitted Care for Creation one-page plans from a number of congregations indicate high interest in learning more about installing solar panels. **To register for the Zoom, please send your name and the congregation you serve to Care for God's Creation team chair Deacon Meg Nielsen at churchladymeg@hotmail.com.** A link for the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you. The meeting may be recorded for future use.

Madison Learning Community: Introduction to the New Testament

Registration is now upon for Madison Learning Community's spring course, Introduction to the New Testament.

Madison Learning Community is a dynamic and diverse cohort of Madison-area Christians eager to deepen their ministry skills and knowledge of the Bible. **This seminary-level course will be offered in a hybrid format with class gatherings on Tuesdays 6-7:40pm (January 23 – April 16, 2024) and video lectures available to watch between gatherings.**



Click [here](#) for an informational flyer. Click the button below to register.

Register for Madison Learning Community Course

Call or email

PRAYER

REQUEST to

Jan Cowan - 767-4616 - jancowan@tds.net

It is our time to build a legacy

Become a member of the Legacy Fund. Members of the Legacy Fund come from all walks of life and are united by a desire to preserve our beautiful Church, Cemetery and adjoining land. Vermont Lutheran Church owns and maintains a cemetery, historic church building, Gathering Place and 115 acres of adjacent land with a hilltop viewscape. Christian stewardship involves the faithful management of all the gifts God has given us, including accumulated, inherited and appreciated resources. Therefore, we created the Legacy Fund to encourage, receive and administer these gifts.

Our goal is to generate and maintain a Legacy Fund of \$1 Million dollars, or more. Through receipt of bequests, grants and/or gifts, contributions to the Legacy Fund and investment growth will serve three very important purposes now and into the future:

1. Expand the cemetery and develop and maintain the adjacent land in a manner that maximizes its natural beauty and preserves its ecological importance; and,
2. Provide funds to pay property taxes on the portion of the adjacent land subject to taxes; and,
3. Provide funds for future maintenance of the cemetery and building and grounds needs of the Church.

Any legacy member whose contribution totals \$1,000 or more will be recognized with a brass plate on a prominently displayed plaque. Annual meeting reports will include all the names of those individuals who made a contribution of any amount that year.

February Newsletter
articles are due
January 30th

to Elizabeth Herrling at
vermont_church@tds.net

Vermont **L**UTHERAN **C**hurch
9886 Vermont Church Road
Black Earth, WI 53515
Telephone (608) 767-3312

E-mail address: Vermont_Church@tds.net
Website: vermontlutheran.org

Visit Vermont's Website:

www.vermontlutheran.org

Password: CARES

Log on to see all Vermont
news and pictures!

