



## WE ARE NEVER ALONE

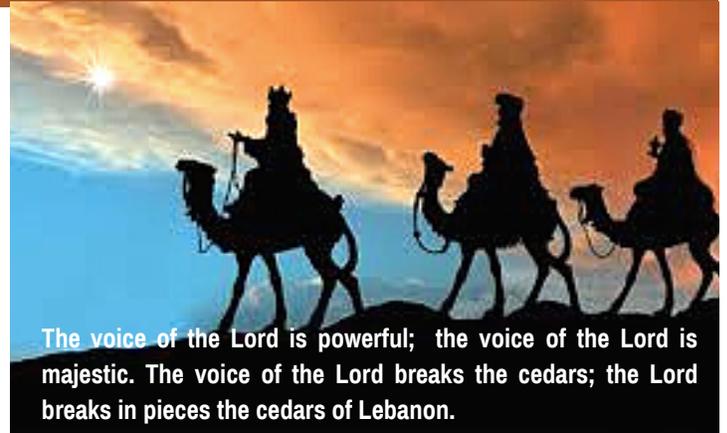
*From our Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton*

The room was spare and dimly lit. We sat on folding chairs in a circle—young Honduran women and some of us from the ELCA. We had come to Honduras to observe the work of AMMPARO (Accompanying Migrant Minors with

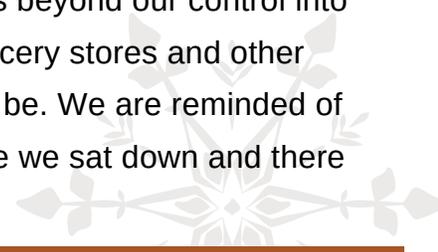
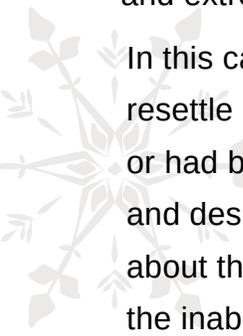
Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities). This is the ELCA's strategy to help youth who have been forced to flee their home countries because of violence, abuse, extortion by gangs and extreme poverty. Amparo is the Spanish word for shelter or refuge.

In this case, AMMPARO partnered with the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonites to resettle returned migrants—those who had tried to seek asylum in the United States but had failed or had been denied and deported back to Honduras. One by one they told us their stories of fear and desperation. Not a one undertook the long and dangerous trek north on a whim. They told us about the abuse they had suffered, about family members who had been killed by gangs, about the inability to make a living because of the extortion by organized crime. They talked about the bitter sadness of leaving home and family, and the uncertainty of the future I remember one young woman in particular. She was pregnant when she tried to migrate to the United States. She had the baby somewhere along the way. She was far from home, mostly alone and desperately wanted her mother to be with her. None of this is what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new and strange existence. She and her baby were now back in Honduras—but not at home. Home was too dangerous.

Remember last Christmas? Remember all of the preparations, the travel to be with family? Remember the holy beauty of the Christmas Eve liturgy and receiving Christ's grace and forgiveness at his table? The shopping and Christmas caroling? The in-person gatherings? All that has changed. The pandemic hasn't forced us from our homes but into our homes, sheltering in place, isolated. Not together, but physically distanced. Not gathered with family and friends, but forced apart because of the threat of infection. Forced by circumstances beyond our control into this strange existence. Oh, there will be Christmas carols piped into grocery stores and other essential services, but they will be painful reminders of how life used to be. We are reminded of the experience of the exiles in Babylon: "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.



**The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.**



## WE ARE NEVER ALONE CONT.

On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captives asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Psalm 137)? I told the young Honduran woman about another young woman who was forced to leave home because of a government decree. She, too, was pregnant and made a long and difficult journey. She, too, was far from home and without her mother when the baby came. She had to find shelter wherever she could. This wasn't what she had hoped for when she was growing up. Circumstances beyond her control had forced her into this new existence. That young woman was Mary and the child was Jesus. Precisely in our distress, in our dislocation, the Lord shows up. Emmanuel—God with us—makes his home in the very places we find foreign or isolating. The young Honduran woman, and all of us, can find hope because of the birth of Mary's child. There is no God-forsaken place and we are never alone—not in hospital rooms, or sheltering in place, or Zoom calls or on dangerous roads.

Many of us will not be physically home for Christmas, but we are truly home in Christ.

*The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton*

## Announcements

**May you have a Blessed and Happy New Year. May the Light of Epiphany shine into your life, banishing the darkness.**

**Would you like to start up again our weekly Zoom Fellowship time? We would begin at 10:45 am on Sundays, allowing time to worship online first. If you are interested, please contact the church office or Pr. Amy.**

**If you would like to volunteer to help with worship by singing or reading, please call the church office and let us know! We usually (though not always) record on Friday afternoons, depending on people's schedules. Thanks!**





# Epiphany



## Ponder Anew...what the Almighty can do!

As we begin the new calendar year, we enter into the Church's season of Epiphany, starting Jan. 6. It is the day we celebrate the arrival of the magi after following the Star. The Star which lead to the Light of the World. There is a tradition across the Church, which we did last year, involving the Epiphany Star. At the beginning of the year, you get an Epiphany Star with a word. That becomes your 'word' for the year. Last year, my word was opportunity. One of the devotionals I use is the Daily Texts put out by the Moravian church. I learned a study guide from them that helps when reading the texts. It is the TRIP method- Thanks (what is God offering you, something new about your identity that you can see as a gift from God. As you give thanks, you confirm the truth of what God has given you.) Regret (what is one habit or attitude that isn't in agreement with this image. In one sentence, confess how this connects with your behavior); Intercession (Ask the Holy Spirit for help in one concrete way you would like to change or improve); Purpose (What concrete thing is God leading you to do today? Be specific, not general). After reading each reading, I use a journal to record how the readings spoke to me using those 4 headings. I added my Epiphany Star Word of Opportunity. What opportunity might God be presenting to me through the readings? While some days readings were easier than others, it was a useful tool in studying the daily texts, connecting me closer with God and what God might be revealing to me and helping me grow in my spiritual journey.

Last year during worship, I passed around a basket that allowed you to pick a star with a word on it, trusting the Spirit to give you just the right word. Since this year we are not worshipping in person yet, I am suggesting you chose a word that that starts with the initial of your first name. I have provided a list of possible words (though certainly not complete) for each letter. See which one pops out at you and make that your word. If none of those words connect with you, feel free to use any word with which you bond. If you don't want to do it the whole year, I have provided questions for you to use your Epiphany Star word for 6 weeks. Obviously, this is not required, but I found the process described above to be very helpful. I invite you to join me as we continue to grow and learn in our faith. Please feel free to share how this is going with you. If you would be interested in having a shared discussion with others, I'd be glad to host a Zoom meeting. Just let me know!

*Pr. Amy*

### A

Authentic  
Awe  
Abide  
Alive  
Abundance  
Accomplishment  
Adaptable  
Astonishment

### B

Blessed  
Blissful  
Balance  
Benevolence  
Beloved  
Brand-new  
Becoming  
Bold

### C

Caring  
Calm  
Capable  
Connection  
Challenge  
Cherished  
Change  
Courage

### D

Daring  
Decisive  
Deliberate  
Delight  
Determined  
Devout  
Diversity  
Dynamic

### E

Eager  
Ernest  
Empathy  
Enjoy  
Excitement  
Emerging  
Essential  
Enough

# Ponder Anew...what the Almighty can do! Cont.

<b>F</b> Faithful Forgiveness Fulfillment Flexible Follow Fellowship Fruitful Feeling	<b>G</b> Grace Gratitude Genuine Gentle Generosity Given Growth Germinate	<b>H</b> Hope Help Humble Healing Hospitality Honor Happiness Health	<b>I</b> Improve Independent Influence Innovative Insight Inspire invitation	<b>J</b> Join Justify Jubilant Just
<b>K</b> Kind Knowledge Kindred	<b>L</b> Light Laugh Love Learn Lesson Life Listen Loyal	<b>M</b> Miracle Motivate Meaningful Mercy Meditate Mindful Magical Mission	<b>N</b> Nurture New Nourish Nature Notice Next Necessary Neighbor	<b>O</b> Open Optimistic Opportunity Observe Obedient Option
<b>P</b> Power Positive Plenty Passion Peace Patience Ponder Purpose	<b>Q</b> Quiet Quality Quick Quest	<b>R</b> Rejoice Respect Restore Reflection Reassure Reform Rest Reveal	<b>S</b> Spirit Simple Support Surprise Stirring Success Sacred Strength	<b>T</b> Transform Trust Thrive Truth Tranquil Together Tolerance
<b>U</b> Upbeat Understand Unwavering Unity Unselfish Uplifting Unwavering Unconditional	<b>V</b> Value Vital Vibrant Variety Validate Versatility	<b>W</b> Welcome Worthy Wondrous Willing Wonder Wisdom Worship	<b>Y</b> Yearning Yield Yes Youthfulness	<b>Z</b> Zealous Zest Zion

Blessings and Happy New Year to each of you as together we live out our mission of  
**Belong. Believe. Be sent. Share Jesus Christ for Life!**

Pr. Amy

# Epiphany Star Word Study

(adapted from a study from Wendy Russel, White Rock UMC)

You are invited to write down or journal your thoughts and ideas-  
it will help to look back and build on previous insights.



## EPIPHANY

### Week 1:

- \*What was your initial response to the word you chose?  
Did you want to keep it or trade it? Why?
- \*Why do you think you got the word you did?
- \*What is your initial thought as to what God wants you to learn?
- \*What are some synonyms for your word? Feel free to use a dictionary or Google.
- \*Is there a poem or song or story that comes to mind when you think of your word?
- \*If you want, write your thoughts down, write (or find) a poem or draw a picture about your word.

### Week 2:

- \*Where is your word found in Scripture? (Use a concordance, Biblegateway.com or BibleHub.com to help in your search).
- \*Which scripture(s) are your favorite or speak to you? Why? Write them out and review them often.
- \*What scripture do you not like or makes you uncomfortable regarding your word? Why? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you more about this.

### Week 3:

- \*What are some words that mean the opposite of your word? (Sometimes that can give us insights about our word.)
- \*As you think about your word, similar words and opposites, what insights do you have? What thoughts come to mind? How does that connect with some of your thoughts and ideas about your word from previous weeks?

### Week 4:

- \*Ponder your word in relation to the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Does anything come to mind?
- \*Are you able to connect with our Triune God in a different way or on a different level? How?
- \*Is God revealing anything to you in relation to your Word? What?
- \*Are you able to connect with others in a different way or on a different level in regards to your word? How?

### Week 5:

- \*What hymn(s) or songs come to mind in relation to your word?  
How does that reach out to you? What comes to mind?
- \*Is it a song of praise, prayer, reflection, sending or something else?
- \*Sing/play that hymn/song at least once a day for a few days. What images or what else does God reveal to you?

### Week 6:

- \*How might your word and your insights adjust how you approach your worship experience? Through scripture, prayer, music, liturgy, individually, with others?

### Week 7:

- \*Thinking back to your previous ideas and insights, how is your word influencing your walk with Christ and your discipleship journey?
- \*How might your word influence your living out your call to outreach and mission?
- \*How does your word influence your sense of believing, belonging, being sent and sharing Jesus Christ for Life?

# Celebration and Inspiration for the New Year!

## JANUARY BIRTHDAY'S

1/1 KROUSE, SAMUEL

1/2 PATTISON, MICHEALA

1/5 HAUSER, RUTH

1/6 PERKINS, JON

1/16 GRANT, PATTY

1/16 CHRASTIL, MARY

1/22 BETTEN-NICCUM, MARIE

God will bestow upon you His blessings, and He will see you through the bumpy roads. He will fill you heart with love and your mind with peace!

**Dear God, If today I lose my hope, please remind me that your plans are better than my dream.**

**They set out;  
and there,  
ahead of them,  
went the star  
that they had seen  
at its rising,  
until it stopped  
over the place  
where the child was.**

Matthew 2.9



May the faith of God be with you this year. May the peace of God surround you, and may you be blessed each day!

## Scripture for January

### January 3

Jerimiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, Eph. 1:3-14, Gospel- John 1:[1-9] 10-18

### January 10

Gen. 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Act. 19:1-7, Gospel- Mark 1:4-11

### January 17

1 Sam. 3:1-10 [11-20], Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Cor. 6:12-20, Gospel- John 1:43-51

### January 24

Jonah 3:1-5,10, Psalm 62:5-12,1 Cor. 7:29-31, Gospel- John 1:43-51

### January 31

Deut. 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Cor.8:1-13, Gospel- Mark 1:21-28

Come let us  
*Adore*  
Him



# Report from Council

**Looking Back at 2020-** It's good to be finally looking back on 2020. It's good to see it in our review mirror. It was a year like few have ever experienced. Thank God for that! 2020 was filled with unimaginable challenges and ordeals. Amidst the heart-rending isolation, suffering and death of the pandemic, 2020 witnessed economic regression, business closings, significant unemployment, hunger, natural and environmental disasters, racial discord, civil unrest, political disunion, and even a Christmas Day domestic bombing. 2020 changed life as we know it and a new normal was conceived. It had dramatic effects on us as a world, as a nation, as individuals, and most certainly as a church, a community of faith. Zion, like most churches, was changed. We are not the same and we face challenges.

**Looking Ahead to 2021 -**Your church leadership, Pastor and Council, are well aware of the trials and tests that lie ahead. How will we reunite our church family? How will we restore the close personal relationships we previously enjoyed? How will we worship together safely? How will we re-energize our walks of faith? How will we reach out to our community? How will we share the love of God with others? How will we do all that must be done with a smaller community? How will we manage within new financial constraints? What will be our new normal? How will we change to meet this new normal head on? Are we even capable of changing; willing to accept God doing a new thing in and through us? Your church leadership asks for your patience, understanding, active participation, and prayerful support as we commit ourselves to the challenges that lie ahead; as we adjust to a new normal; as new ideas are shared; as potentially disruptive change is tried; as new folks are introduced into our tight knit family, as we seek God's guidance to lead us into this unknown. It is our hope and prayer that when we look back on 2021 we will see a Zion that looks and feels different than it does today; a Zion that is healthy, moving forward, looking outward, and thriving. Just as 2021 is filled with hope as the Coronavirus vaccine restores life to our communities and throughout the world so may we all be filled with hope as Zion seeks new life as well. Of one thing we can be sure, God is with us.

*God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Psalm 46:1-2*

David Lawrenz; Council President



*Pray for one another*

**Current:** Robert & Lois Dowd, Clayton Marcum, Becky Oden, Nancy Jamerson, Dean McKinley, Jayden Plotner, Lynn Losby, Amy, Haley, John, Janet, Dale, Kathy Sipes, the Rapley family, Bill Leonhard, Patty Price.

**Ongoing:** Jon Perkins, Linda Rager Hampton, Peggy Gilbert, Mara Joy Nelson, Owen Vannoster and his family.

**Homebound:** Marie Betten-Niccum, Bo & Joanne Boettcher, Nancy Coble, Betty Hamlin, Ruth Hauser, Betty Lawrenz, Vada Lee Nixon,

**Conference/ Community Churches:** Epiphany, Ft. Wayne and Pr. Richard Hartman; Faith, Ft. Wayne and Pr. Martha Hampton; Gethsemane, Ft. Wayne and Pr. Debra Meuter; Liberty Mills Church of the Brethren and Pr. Kelly Beutler.

**Inspire. Ignite. Invite. Congregations:** Grace & Glory, Goshen, KY; Bethany, Indianapolis; Zion's, Pershing, IN; Calvary, Cromwell, IN; Grace & Peace, Evansville; Gethsemane, Indianapolis.

May the faith of God be with you this year. May the peace of God surround you, and may you be blessed each day!



Epiphany

The Lord is calling Zion to live out its calling to belong to Jesus Christ and to each other by virtue of our baptism; to believe in Jesus Christ by virtue of our faith given as a gift of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament; to be sent by Jesus Christ as ambassadors of the gospel in our homes, workplaces, communities and to the ends of the earth.



**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
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.HAPPY.  
New Year