

Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas

January
2019

New Year's Message

FROM THE PASTOR

This article is based on Pastor Vogts' sermon for New Year's Day.

Have you got your calendar yet for 2019? If you want some fun in the New Year, look for a calendar that lists all the wacky commemorations for each day. National Pickle Day on November 14th; World Yodeling Day on January 30th; International Bagpipe Day on March 10th. There isn't a day that goes by that doesn't have at least two or three of these "official" yet wacky commemorations.

Why do Christian churches, such as ours, often have services on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day? What is it we are celebrating? Because of a series of Biblical and historical coincidences, each year on January 1st, *two* celebrations collide: the secular *holiday* of New Year's Day, and the Christian *holy day* of The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord.

From the earliest days of Christianity, there was a deep desire for Christians to commemorate every year significant events in the earthly life of our Lord: His birth, death, and resurrection. Because the specific date of His birth is not recorded in the Bible, many people assume that December 25th was just a wild guess, arrived at arbitrarily. But, there actually was method to the ancient church's madness in picking December 25th as the day to celebrate The Nativity of our Lord.

Although the Bible doesn't give the date of His birth, because Jesus' death occurred on Passover we know it must have been the 14th of Nissan according to the Jewish calendar. The early Christians calculated that was equivalent to the 25th of March according to our western calendar. So, that's the date they started with, assuming Jesus died on March 25th.

The next step was a widespread belief in the ancient world that famous people, who had a big impact on the



Rembrandt, The Circumcision of Our Lord, 1654

world, such as emperors and kings, would be conceived and die on the same date. Of course, for Christians the most famous person ever, with the greatest impact of all, was the King of Kings, Jesus.

So, to the early Christians, it seemed obvious that if Jesus died on March 25th, He must also have been conceived on March 25th. One early Christian writer said: *"Therefore our Lord was conceived on March 25th, which is the day of both the passion of our Lord and His conception. For, on that day He was conceived, and on the same day He also suffered."**

This is why the church festival of the Annunciation of Our Lord, when the angel appeared to the Virgin Mary to announce to her that she would give birth to a Son, doesn't occur during the Advent or Christmas seasons, but on March 25th, which most years falls during the middle of Lent.

So, the first step for the early church in deciding when to celebrate Jesus' birth was the date of His death on the 14th of Nissan, which they reckoned was equal to March 25th. Then was the assumption, according to the widely held belief in the ancient world, that if He died on March 25th, He must have been conceived on March 25th. After that it was simply a matter of adding the customary nine months to arrive at the assumed date of His birth: December 25th. As the early church father St. Augustine wrote: *"For He is believed to have been conceived on the 25th*

of March, upon which day He also suffered. . . therefore He was born, according to tradition, upon December the 25th."†

Now, we don't know if that's really correct. Because, the Bible itself does *not* say that Jesus was conceived and died on the same date. That's just an ancient tradition they had about famous people. And the Christmas story says simply, *"the days were accomplished that she should be delivered"* (Luke 2:6), but not whether it was exactly a nine month pregnancy. So, the odds of December 25th actually being the day of Jesus' birth are probably about 1 in 365.

But, the ancient Christians wanted to pick a date to celebrate His birth, and there was method to their madness for the date they chose. December 25th was not arrived at just arbitrarily, or because it was close to winter solstice, as many people assume. It was really based, from their perspective, on logical deduction—from the one date they *did* know, the date of His death at Passover on the 14th of Nissan.

This year marks only the 100th anniversary of the universal observance of New Year's Day on January 1st. But, our Christian holy day of The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord has been celebrated on January 1st for nearly 2,000 years.

After thus arriving at the date upon which Christians traditionally celebrate The Nativity of Our Lord, the next step, that resulted in another Christian holy day falling on January 1st, comes from two verses in the Bible. In Genesis 17:9-12, the Lord commands Abraham: *"For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised . . . this is My covenant with you and your descendants after you."*

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Published Monthly by

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January, 2019*

Circumcision was commanded by the Lord as a vivid, inescapable, ever-present reminder to the Hebrew people, on the very bodies of their menfolk from generation to generation, that the Messiah and Savior of the world would be born among their Hebrew people. As Paul says in Romans 9:5, *"For from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all."*

Jesus subjected Himself to such Old Testament Law *"to fulfill all righteousness"* (Matthew 3:15). And so, the first verse following the familiar Christmas story says: *"On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him, He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He had been conceived"* (Luke 2:21).

So, the church observes the holy day of The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord on January 1st because He was crucified on the 14th of Nissan; which was calculated to be March 25th; which was assumed according to ancient custom to also be the day of His conception; which makes December 25th nine months later the day of His birth; and from December 25th the eight days prescribed for Hebrew boys to be circumcised is January 1st.

The ancient Christians wanted to pick a date to celebrate Christ's birth, and there was method to their madness for the date they chose.

Now, except for His death on the 14th of Nissan, we don't know if any of those dates are correct. But, that's the logic the early church followed in setting the dates which have been passed down to us for commemorating these events in the life of our Lord. As the Augsburg Confession and Apology of the Lutheran Church declares: *"We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the church . . . among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like."*

The custom of celebrating The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord on January 1st each year goes back nearly two thousand years. A *much* more recent observance on this same date is New Year's Day.

We take it for granted that the New Year begins on January 1st. But, historically, the new calendar year has started on all sorts of different dates. Of course, we still have the separate Jewish New Year and Chinese New Year, but even among predominantly Christian nations there was long disagreement about when the New Year should begin.

The secular holiday of New Year's Day is actually a latecomer to January 1st, and the new kid on the block

Shortly after the Reformation, Pope Gregory XIII declared in 1582 that from then on New Year's Day would be January 1st, and that was adopted in Roman Catholic countries. However, Protestant countries, including Colonial America, weren't going to follow the pope's decree. So, until the 1700's the British Empire, and Colonial America, and most other Protestant countries stubbornly resisted and stuck with the old date for starting the New Year: March 25th. The Russians and their Orthodox Church held out even longer, not adopting January 1st as New Year's Day until after the Russian Revolution in 1918.

So, although we now associate January 1st almost exclusively with the secular holiday of New Year's Day, that secular celebration is actually a latecomer to January 1st, and the new kid on the block. As a matter of fact, this year marks only the 100th anniversary of the universal observance of New Year's Day on January 1st. But, our Christian holy day of The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord has been celebrated on January 1st for nearly two thousand years.

So, that's how these two celebrations came to collide on January 1st, the Christian *holy day*, and the secular *holiday*. At first glance, commemorating each year The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord may seem a bit like celebrating one of those offbeat, wacky holidays, like National Pickle Day, or International Bagpipe Day.

But, the deep spiritual significance of this event is summed up in the Gospel Reading appointed for this festival: *“On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise Him, He was named Jesus, the name the angel had given Him before He had been conceived.”*

In Greek, the name “Jesus” is pronounced like the Spanish, “YEAH-zeus.” And the Greek is really a form of the Hebrew name Joshua, pronounced “Yeshua” in Hebrew. That was actually Jesus’ name, what He was called during His life on earth: “YEAH-zeus” in Greek, or most often the Hebrew “Yeshua.”

Many of our English names originated with the person’s occupation: Smith for a blacksmith, Baker for those who did baking, Taylor for those who made clothes, Miller for those who milled grain. It’s the same in Hebrew, most of the names have a meaning. Ezekiel means “God Is Strong,” Isaiah means “The Lord Is My Salvation.” And Joshua or “Yeshua” means “The Lord Saves.”

Jesus’ very name literally tells us who He is, and what He does: *“The Lord Saves.”* As the angel told Joseph in a dream, *“You are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21). His very name tells us He is the Lord, who saves us from our sins.

Hebrews 9:22 says, *“Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness.”* That’s the meaning for us of The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord, the holy day we commemorate each year on January 1st: Already at just eight days old, the first shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ’s blood, for your salvation. As the Apostle John declares, *“the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin”* (1 John 1:7).

So, it’s just a happenstance of history that New Year’s Day and The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord fall now on the same day of the year. But, it is a fitting coincidence. Because, at the beginning of a New Year we often look back over the year now past with regret and sorrow, over our failures, weaknesses, sins. But, The Circumcision and Naming of Our Lord is a reminder to us of the Good News proclaimed by His very name: *“The Lord Saves.”*



Christmas Tree & Poinsettia Donations

Our thanks to Leland & Slina Prothe for obtaining two Thrivent cards to fund the purchase of our lovely new Christmas trees and other new Christmas decor, and to the Trinity Youth and Sunday School for the beautiful decorating! Thank you also to all who donated poinsettias to beautify our church this Christmas, and Barb Dillenbeck for arranging them. There were many comments from visitors about how our church was decorated so nicely, and one member said, “It has never looked prettier!” This list of donations was taken from the sign-up sheet in the Gathering Room. Thank you to Gayle Plummer for sharing the photo of the Sanctuary. The other photo shows the new Heritage Room fireplace also festively decorated for Christmas!



Given By

In Memory or Honor Of

Kevin & Denise Debrick (2)	Lorene Debrick Fred & Billee Lee
Nina Gerken	Leland Gerken
Stan & Gayle Plummer (2)	John & Bonnie Plummer Leland Gerken
Gladys Prothe & Family (2)	Myrtle Thoden Bob Prothe
Venita & Arlin Prothe (2)	Vivian & LaVern Wilson Vernele Pipes
Doris Rodewald	Herman Rodewald
Rev. Kevin & Terese Vogts (3)	Don & Lucille Schmidt Leroy & Ruth Vogts Our Grandparents

You go into the New Year with a clean slate before God. Your failures, weaknesses, and sins of the year now past are all wiped away. For, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin."

Pastor Kevin Vogts

* Andrew McGowan, "How December 25 Became Christmas," *Bible Review*, Vol. 18, No. 6 (December 2002), p. 46.

† "On the Trinity"



Chili & Chicken Noodle Dinner January 27

Please join us for a Chili & Chicken Noodle Dinner on Sunday, January 27, including a craft and bake sale. Please let Jan Minden or Phyllis Trickett know if you can assist in any way such as furnishing homemade noodles or desserts for dinner. Any craft and baked or food items for sale will be appreciated!



Voters Assembly January 20

The first quarterly meeting of the Voters Assembly for 2019 will be on Sunday, January 20, following the worship service.

The Church Council will meet in advance of the Voters Assembly, on Tuesday, January 15 at 7:00pm.



Sermons for January

Sermons by Pastor Vogts are available in both printed and audio form on our website at www.trinitylcms.org/sermons; as podcasts in the iTunes store by searching for "Rev. Kevin Vogts"; and printed copies of that day's sermon and several of the most recent sermons are available in the Gathering Room.

January 1 (New Year's Day)

"The Name the Angel
Had Given Him"

Luke 2:21

January 6 (Epiphany)

"The Way of the Wise Men"

Matthew 2:1-12

January 13

"You Are My Beloved Son"

Luke 3:21-22

January 20

"Now I Know in Part"

1 Corinthians 13:12

January 27

"The Year of the Lord's Favor"

Luke 4:19



After
Church
Snacks

Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship during 2019? Consider signing up for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries—nearly the whole year is open!

There is a sign-up sheet on the table with the snacks. Our Generations group has generously agreed to provide and prepare the coffee and juice each week! So those signing up are only asked to provide some treat. Thanks to all those providing snacks for Coffee Hour!

January 6
Terry Vogts

January 13
Sharon & Gladys Prothe

January 20
Linda Prothe

January 27
Chili & Chicken Noodle Dinner

Missionaries of the Month

Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services—and you are encouraged to remember in your personal prayers—specific missionaries around the world who are supported by our congregation through our mission offerings to our Synod.

January 6
Rev. Michael & Yoko Piescer
Japan

January 13
John & Jenn Wolf
Kenya

January 20
Rev. Michael & Jen-Yi Paul
Taiwan

January 27
Blake & Elizabeth Warren
Dominican Republic



Baptism

Jerilyne Elise Troyer
Baptized December 16, 2018

We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the Body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, to work with us in His kingdom.



Nursing Home Services January 27

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents at Country Club Estates and Vintage Park on January 27. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. We begin at 1:30pm at Country Club Estates and then go to Vintage Park for the second service.

The residents really enjoy these services, especially singing their favorite hymns. It's great to have church members there to greet the residents and sing along. We have a faithful few members who help but we could use your help too!

Our other nursing home services scheduled for 2019 are:

- ✘ February 17—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ March 17—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ April 14—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ May 19—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ June 16—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ July 14—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ August 11—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ September 8—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ October 6—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ November 3—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ December 1—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ December 29—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ January 26, 2020—North Point and Medical Lodge



Trinity's Annual

Chili & Chicken Noodle Dinner and Craft & Bake Sale

Sunday, January 27, 11:00am

All Invited—Everyone Welcome!

Come Enjoy the Fun, Food, and Fellowship!



Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the Church Office at 913-849-3344 or email Church Secretary Stacey Elkinton at trinitylutheranblock@gmail.com.

- January 1 Bryce Peckman
- January 2 Jan Minden
- January 2 Anisha O'Barto
- January 2 Tara Smith
- January 4 Cathy Hieber
- January 4 Jessica Parks
- January 4 Stan Plummer
- January 4 Dustin Prothe
- January 5 Levi Alcorn
- January 6 Matthew Richardson
- January 7 Caylin Garrison
- January 7 Sunnye Oswald
- January 8 Mike England
- January 8 Cormick Ferrell
- January 8 Linda Ferrell
- January 8 Michael Kriesel
- January 9 Jobie Debrick

- January 10 Don Minden
- January 11 Phyllis Trickett
- January 12 Devon Smithhisler
- January 13 Bill Dillenbeck
- January 13 Lorri Jenson
- January 14 Paul Deering
- January 14 Bruce Nowasell
- January 15 Chancie Minden
- January 15 Cooper Minden
- January 17 Lindsey Hall
- January 20 Zachary Donahue
- January 21 Jody Burnett
- January 22 Rick Holte
- January 24 Trent Fleming
- January 25 Mike Koelsch
- January 25 Webb Oberheide
- January 25 Aubry Peckman
- January 25 Joel Plummer
- January 25 Mike Thompson
- January 26 Gregg Hall
- January 26 Michael Thoden
- January 26 Philip Oberheide
- January 27 Suzie Prothe
- January 27 Brianna Hoden
- January 28 Jimmy Massey
- January 29 Lindsey Holtz
- January 30 Elbert Jones
- January 30 Mason Kunard
- January 30 Mitch Plummer
- January 31 Morgan Richards
- January 11 ... Jeron & Kendra Fuller (15)



Our thanks to Michelle Haley, Kristina Jenkins, and all the Sunday School staff for their dedication leading the Children's Christmas Program, and the children and youth for doing a great job praising our Lord Jesus! Special thanks also to the Trinity Choir, Trinity Tone Chimes, and all who enriched our Christmas services with their musical talents. Many visitors commented it was a wonderful service!



Thank you to everyone who gave so many wonderful gifts for our Angel Tree, to help the children of our church share the Christmas spirit with less fortunate children in our community!



Portals of Prayer

The new quarterly devotional booklet Portals of Prayer for January thru March, 2019 is available in the Gathering Room, in the traditional "pocket" size, a medium "digest" size (same size as *Reader's Digest*), and large-print.

You will be blessed by the brief daily devotions and short daily Bible readings prayers. There are also suggested longer readings for each day, and in the back of each issue a wonderful collection of prayers for each day of the week and special needs and occasions.

A great way to keep close to the Lord in the New Year!

Adult Bible Study



Our current study in Adult Bible Class is "Put on the Full Armor of God!" as described in Ephesians 6:10-19: *the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit.*

What is the meaning of each of these for you? How can you "Put on the Full Armor of God!" in your life? Join in Sundays at 9:00am in the Heritage Room!



Looking Ahead to Lent

Why does the date of Easter change? A compromise in the early church about whether Easter should always fall on a Sunday, or like Christmas rotate through the days of the week, led to the formula that Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon on or after



the spring equinox, meaning Easter falls sometime between March 22 and April 25. This year Easter falls on April 21, nearly the latest possible.

All the other dates of the church calendar are based on the date of Easter. So, this year our first Lenten service for Ash Wednesday will be on March 6, continuing throughout Lent each Wednesday at 7:00pm, with a Lenten Supper before.