

Trinity Tribune

Trinity Lutheran Church ✠ Paola, Kansas



2020



The Christian Origins of Groundhog Day?

The word “holiday” is actually a contraction of “holy day,” and most of our secular “holidays” were originally “holy days” in the Christian Church Year. If you check the Church Year calendar on pages x-xi in the front of *Lutheran Service Book* you will see that there are two festivals of the Church Year during February, The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary on February 2nd, and the festival of St. Matthias, Apostle on February 24th. For one of these “holy days” there is also an American “holiday” on the same date: The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary and Groundhog Day both fall on February 2nd. That’s not just a coincidence, because believe it or not even Groundhog Day was originally a Christian holy day!

The Old Testament background of The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary is found in Leviticus 12:2-8:

Say to the Israelites: “A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the

sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. . . . When the days of her purification . . . are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. . . . If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.”

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord,” and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

This also explains why the festival of The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary falls on February 2nd, because it became



The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary as recorded in Luke 2:22-24 is depicted in this 1530 woodcut from a book of Martin Luther’s sermons.

So, in ancient Israel on the 40th day after giving birth to a son the mother would go to the temple at Jerusalem and present an offering for ritual cleansing. This is the background of and reason for Joseph and Mary’s actions in Luke 2:22-24:

customary to celebrate Christ’s birth on December 25th, and 40 days from that date is February 2nd.

It is revealing that Mary and Joseph apparently could not afford a lamb for the offering, and so instead presented the alternate offering allowed the poor,

“a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” This shows the poverty of this couple and their Child, as St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich.”

The other theological significance for your salvation of The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary is found in Galatians 4:4-5: “When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.” It was for your salvation that Jesus lived out on earth a perfect, holy life, perfectly fulfilling all the will and law of God, including these Old Testament requirements for the ritual purification of His mother and His presentation at the temple on the 40th day after His birth.

In Matthew 17:24-27, in the miracle of a coin found in a fish’s mouth for Jesus to pay the temple tax, He explains that as the Son of God He is by right exempt from such requirements. Nevertheless, He pays the tax in order “not to give offense.” That is also why The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary is significant for you and your salvation, because His perfect obedience of this and all the requirements of God’s law is credited to

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you. As Jesus tells John the Baptist at His Baptism—from which by right He also was exempt—“It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

Martin Luther’s hymn “In Peace and Joy I Now Depart” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #938) was probably written for The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary in 1524, and several of Luther’s sermons for this occasion are recorded, in which he explains the significance of this festival for our salvation, including these comments from 1534:

Christ placed Himself under the Law even though He was not obligated. There is consolation for us on this festival of Christ’s presentation at the temple and His gracious compliance under the Law. . . He lowers Himself and endures such an unnecessary obedience. . . He did it all for our sake. . . (Sermons of Martin Luther, House Postils, Vol. 1, p. 296).

At one time The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary was a major Christian festival, celebrated with great fanfare and a set of elaborate customs, in a manner similar to the way we still observe Christmas and Easter. One tradition was a candlelight procession to the church before the worship service—or “mass”—was held on this festival, and therefore it came to be called “Candlemas,” a name still commonly used for this day in many parts of the world.

As with Christmas and Easter, many other customs and traditions arose related to Candlemas. Instead of dyeing Easter eggs, for Candlemas families would make candles. And instead of Christmas fruitcake, they would eat special foods for Candlemas, such as Crepe Suzette in France and tamales in Mexico.

One Candlemas folk tradition was that the weather on this date would determine the remainder of the winter season. In this vein Luther describes Candlemas as the time “when spring is bursting forth” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 20, p. 166).

An old English rhyme says:

*If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter has another flight.
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Winter will not come again.*

And an ancient Scottish proverb declares:

*If Candlemas be bright and clear,
There’ll be two winters in the year.*

In much of Europe a fox, bear, or badger’s actions on Candlemas was thought to predict the weather. There was a German rhyme:

*When the bear at Candlemas
His shadow sees
For another six weeks
Back in his hole he flees.*

This tradition was brought to America by the “Pennsylvania Dutch,” with the German bear replaced by the American groundhog, and that is how our Groundhog Day actually originated. So, although it is now an entirely secular “holiday,” even Groundhog Day actually started as a Christian “holy day”!

The surprising Christian origin even of Groundhog Day is a small example of how Christianity has permeated and influenced every aspect of our culture. More importantly, societal values we cherish, such as justice, tolerance, and care for the poor, needy, weak, and vulnerable, stem from this Christian heritage. While it is perhaps not significant that we have largely forgotten the Christian origins of Groundhog Day, when we as a nation forget the Christian foundations of our society and drift further and further from our spiritual roots we will eventually lose the distinctive Christian values that have been such a blessing—something sadly already happening in many countries with a Christian heritage, and to some extent in our nation too.

In addition to Luther’s hymn, *Lutheran Service Book* includes another hymn specifically for The Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of Mary, #519, “In His Temple Now Behold Him,” as well as propers for the festival including this Collect of the Day:

Almighty and ever-living God, as Your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh, grant that we may be presented to You with pure and clean hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Pastor Kevin Vogts

Holy Days and Holidays

Adult Bible Study

We've just enjoyed celebrating another round of the traditional holiday season. But, how did our holidays get started? What do they all really *mean*?

Our current study in Adult Bible Class is *Holy Days and Holidays*. We're looking at the background of the holidays we celebrate, and what, if any, Biblical basis and Christian significance they have. You may be surprised how many of the holidays that we now consider "secular" actually started as Christian holy days—even Groundhog Day (see article page 1).

Come join in Sunday mornings at 9:00am in the Heritage Room for a fascinating look at *Holy Days and Holidays*!



Our records of birthdays and anniversaries may not be 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



Poinsettia Donations

Given By

In Memory or Honor Of

- | | |
|--|--|
| Kevin & Denise Debrick (2) | Lorene Debrick
Fred & Billee Lee |
| Jeff & Karen Garrison, Venita & Arlin Prothe (2) | LaVern & Vivian Wilson
Vernele Pipes |
| Paul & Kathy Haley (2) | All Our Grandparents |
| Kathy Peckman | Darrell Peckman |
| Stan & Gayle Plummer | John & Bonnie Plummer
Leland Gerken |
| Gladys Prothe, Jim & Sharon Prothe (2) | Bob Prothe
Myrtle Thoden
Nada Thoden |
| Doris Rodewald | Herman Rodewald |
| Rev. Kevin & Terese Vogts (2) | Leroy & Ruth Vogts
Our Grandparents |

- January 4 Dustin Prothe
- January 5 Levi Alcorn
- January 6 Matthew Richardson
- January 7 Caylin Garrison
- January 7 Sunnye Oswalt
- 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 (16)



Could you—individual, family, or group—serve snacks sometime after worship during 2020? There is a sign-up sheet for the New Year 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. Consider signing up for special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries.

Thank you to all who provide snacks for Coffee Hour!

January 5
Christmas Eve Leftovers

January 12
Linda Prothe

January 19 & 26
Need Volunteers



Voters Assembly January 19

The first quarterly meeting of the Voters Assembly for 2020 will be on Sunday, January 19, following the worship service.

The Church Council will meet in advance of the Voters Assembly, on Tuesday, January 14 at 7:00pm.

Business will include officer and committee reports, sign replacement, cemetery work, salary reviews. and any other business.



In Christian Sympathy

Philip Allen Windler
September 22, 1959–December 14, 2019

Darrel E. Schultz
November 21, 1951–January 1, 2020

*“Blessed are the dead
who die in the Lord.”*
Revelation 14:13



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)
“In His Hands”
Psalm 139:16

January 5 (Epiphany)
*“Seven Scenes from the
Advent-Christmas Story:
Wise Men Worshipping”*
Matthew 2:1-12

January 12
“The Blessings of Baptism”
Titus 3:4-5

January 19
“The Blood Atonement of Jesus”
John 1:29

January 26
“We Preach Christ Crucified”
1 Corinthians 1:23



Nursing Home Services January 26

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents at North Point and Medical Lodge on January 26. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. We begin at 1:30pm at North Point and then go to Medical Lodge 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 2020 are:

- ✘ February 16—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ March 15—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ April 19—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ May 17—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ June 14—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ July 12—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ August 9—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ September 6—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ October 4—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ November 1—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ November 29—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park
- ✘ December 27—North Point and Medical Lodge
- ✘ January 24, 2021—Country Club Estates and Vintage Park



Angel Tree Thanks

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!



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.

All of this month's missionaries are from Puerto Rico, which experienced two devastating hurricanes in 2017 and at the beginning of 2020 was hit with an earthquake. See the article below for information about the work our Synod is doing there.

January 5

Rev. James & Deaconess Christel Neuendorf
Puerto Rico

January 12

Stephanie Wilde
Puerto Rico

January 19

Rev. Anthony & Jamie DiLiberto
Puerto Rico

January 26

Rev. Gustavo & Ruth Maita
Puerto Rico

*"Brothers, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it is among you."
(2 Thessalonians 3:1)*

MISSION NEWS

Bringing Hope and Comfort in Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is known as the "island of enchantment." But, in 2017 two hurricanes devastated this enchanted isle. Irma did not hit the island directly, but it left many without power. Less than a month later, Maria hit and caused extensive damage.

Maria was a major disaster for Puerto Rico, and the effects of the storm are still evident two years later. Puerto Rico's economy, population and infrastructure were all severely impacted by Maria, and many Puerto Ricans fear their island will never be the same.

"People in Puerto Rico don't feel like they have an identity because of their status as a territory of the United States. It is important for them to know their identity in Baptism and that their citizenship is in heaven," says LCMS missionary Rev. Gustavo Maita. "Especially after the hurricane, the church is spreading the love of Jesus and people in the community are hearing that love and feel loved."

The people of the LCMS responded generously to the plight of Puerto Rico, and the result of that response is renewed mission work and new opportunities for outreach.

Judith Oman, a member of St. Matthews Lutheran Church in Esko, Minnesota, vacationed in Puerto Rico in 2005. "My heart was broken when I saw Hurricane Maria on the news," she said. "On Easter Sunday, I saw in our bulletin that our church was coming to Puerto Rico. I knew I wanted to go to help the people however I could." This past November, Oman served in Puerto Rico with a short-term mission and mercy team from her church.

Much of the damage is still apparent. Even after two years, abandoned buildings and tarped roofs evince the power of the storm. An increase in homelessness, resultant from both the loss of property and the emigration of families to the United States mainland, reflects new needs facing Puerto Rico.

Yet, the true damage from the storms is sometimes unseen. Suicide rates have risen dramatically. Depression is a common ailment. Many suffer from emotional and mental trauma as a result. And it is into this situation that LCMS missionaries bring the Good News of Jesus Christ.

"We all suffer. We walk alongside people in suffering," said Deaconess Christel Neuendorf, an LCMS missionary in Ponce, Puerto Rico. "That's what Christ did. That's what we do."



Rev. Gustavo Maita praying on an evangelism call in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico.



Our little angels—and shepherds and Wise Men and Joseph and Mary—posed for a picture at the last rehearsal for their Children’s Christmas Program. Our thanks to Michelle Haley, Kristina Jenkins, and all the Sunday School staff for their dedication leading this annual Christmas Eve event, 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!

The immediate response to the hurricane involved meeting essential physical needs, especially through the distribution of food and clothing. After those basic needs were no longer as prevalent, the response moved to helping people with larger needs like roofs and house repairs. Now, the work is transitioning to a focus on people’s longer-term situations.

LCMS missionary Rev. Anthony DiLiberto serves alongside Rev. Maita and LCMS lay evangelist William Torres at Principe de Paz (Prince of Peace) Lutheran Church in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico’s third-largest city. “Lutheran theology is centered on our Lord, who gives Himself to His people in the Means of Grace, coming to us in His Word and Sacrament” said DiLiberto. “All that we do here revolves around that.”

The congregation’s work in the community also includes English and music classes, along with continued disaster response, which brings people in to learn life skills. And when they come, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed through the stories used to teach English and the words of the songs learned.

“Music is good for the soul. We have a lot of people who continue to suffer trauma from the hurricane, and life in general is difficult,” said Ruth Maita, Rev. Maita’s wife and an LCMS missionary who teaches music and English. “Music is a balm for a soul and an opportunity to share Christ.”

LCMS mission work in Ponce, the second-largest city in Puerto Rico, began in 2016, culminating in the first service at Fuente de Vida (Fountain of Life) Lutheran Church in 2018. With the recent purchase of a new facility, the congregation is ready to move and expand outreach to the community.

Rev. James Neuendorf, an LCMS missionary in Ponce, centers his ministry around instruction in the Word between weekly services. In all of this, he and his wife and missionary partner Deaconess Christel Neuendorf seek to create a community centered on the Law and Gospel. “It just keeps coming,” said Rev. Neuendorf, as he left to make an emergency hospital visit. Much of his time is spent addressing suicidal people and the many who suffer from mental and physical ailments. Fuente de Vida offers the hope that so many in Ponce desperately need.

“I think of our congregation like the woman at the well. She came for physical needs, water from the well. Christ supplied her with even better water, the living water that only He can give. He patiently talked with her, an outsider and outcast, speaking both the Law and the Gospel to her,” said Rev. Neuendorf. “We want the same for our church. Outsiders and outcasts come here for physical reasons, but they encounter Christ through His Word, who offers them living water through Baptism and new life in Him. Then, joyful at this gift, the same people bring the news to others. Ponce has a lot of people who have been marginalized, and this story from John’s Gospel is a wonderful picture of what Christ does with marginalized and sinful people even today, through mercy ministry and evangelism.”

Sometimes this means inviting people into the church. Other times, it involves going places to bring the Word into their lives. The Neuendorfs have laid the groundwork with community leaders and social workers to reach out to people who live in many of the care facilities in Ponce, especially the geriatric centers near the new church location. Often these opportunities result from simple conversations and a willingness to talk and serve as needed.

The people of Puerto Rico, though American citizens, speak Spanish. This means that both Pastors Neuendorf and DiLiberto preach and teach in Spanish, and they both rejoice that the Lord has called them into this field at this time. Both have mission experience in Spanish-speaking countries, and these two good friends share a common love for proclaiming the Gospel to the people in Puerto Rico.



The new quarterly devotional booklet *Portals of Prayer* for January thru March, 2020 is available in the Gathering Room. A great way to keep close to the Lord in the New Year!