

Happenings at Hope

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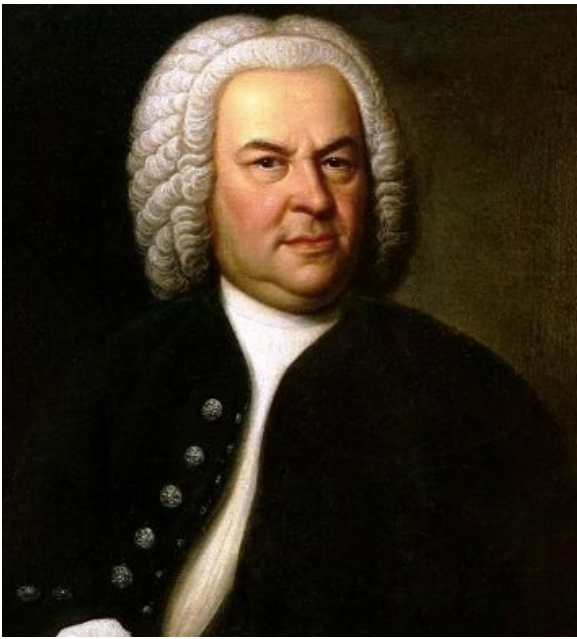
Epiphany – Then and Now

The word “Epiphany” means “manifestation.” The Festival of the Epiphany (which we will be observing on January 7th) marks the first manifestation of Christ to the gentile world, with the star of Bethlehem drawing magi (or “wise men”) from the east to seek out and worship their Savior-King in the city of David. We don’t know exactly how this worked, but there was something about that star that made a deep impression on these highly educated men from a pagan nation, and that caused them to ponder, and then act on, the reality of the God of Israel’s redemptive plan for the whole world.

Today we live in a largely re-paganized society. There are many people today whose parents or grandparents went to church, but who do not themselves either go to church or even understand what church is really all about. But yet there are things which emanate

from the Christian church, as it still exists in our society, that have the potential to draw people to the Savior we worship, and to the faith we confess. The church’s tradition of sacred music, which has embedded itself deeply in western civilization, is one such emanation from the church that is still capable of getting the attention of people who have wandered away from the church itself. What





the Lutheran Church in particular has produced over the centuries, through its composers and hymnists, is often especially helpful in touching the darkened hearts of unbelievers, and of reminding them that there is indeed something more in this universe than what they can touch and see with their physical senses.

Johann Sebastian Bach is probably the best-known Lutheran musician in history. A while back, I heard a fascinating story in an interview that was conducted by Krista Tippett with the great church historian Jaroslav Pelikan in 2003, three years before he passed away (in 2006). In

a discussion of the importance of the historic catholic creeds for Christian faith and thought, Dr. Pelikan told this anecdote: "My late friend, Steven Jay Gould, who insisted with dogmatic fervor that he wasn't a believer, in addition to being a distinguished paleontologist and a terrific communicator, was a member of the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston. And so he sang all this ancient music. And in an interview several years ago that we were both involved in, he was asked about communication with other planets and other worlds, and how should we try to reach people who don't know our language or anything else. And he said, 'We should play the Bach B Minor Mass and say, in as many languages as we can, "This is the best we have ever done, and we would like you to hear it, and we'd like to hear the best you have ever done."' And so he would want broadcast systems blaring across our solar system and beyond it with the B Minor Mass, including 'Credo in unum Deum.'"

the B Minor Mass to be the greatest, most beautiful, and most impressive thing any human being has ever created. In spite of Gould's ideological commitment to materialism and empiricism, there was something in Bach's music – and especially in this composition – that touched the heart of this famous scientist. Only God knows what was ultimately going through Dr. Gould's mind and soul as he lay on his death bed, preparing to meet the maker of the world and of all life within the world, which he had spent a lifetime studying – yet with blinders on! But in any case, Bach's B Minor Mass was like a star that had indeed mystically shone upon Gould's heart, and drawn Gould in the direction of Christ, even though he probably didn't realize that this is what was happening. Whether it ultimately drew him all the way to the manger – to the cross and to the empty tomb – we will not know on this side of eternity. But there was hope for him.

And there is hope for all the materialists and empiricists with whom we live, who have likewise become re-paganized, but who with us are also exposed to the “stars” of divine, saving truth that are in our sky – that is, the remnants and echoes of the Christian church’s song, art, and culture, that still touch people, and draw them in. So, when you have a chance, listen to a recording of the B Minor Mass. (Like this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EH6wdRVqoXQ&t=2735s>) Invite your friends to listen. And pray that they will be touched by, and drawn to, the God and Savior whose praises are therein sung, and whose gospel is therein proclaimed. Remember, too, that the texts of the B Minor Mass – that is, the five Chief Parts of the Mass of the western Christian church – are the texts that we sing in every Divine Service. You can tell your friends about that too, as you invite them to come to church–or to come back to church–with you.

– Rev. David Jay Webber
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Scottsdale AZ



ELS Southwest States Mission Rally

The Circuit 11 (Arizona, California, and Utah) Women's Mission Rally will be held the last Sunday of this month in Lake Havasu City, AZ. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. If you have any questions, see the flier on the bulletin board in the Bible Class room, or talk to Audrey or Marsha.

This is a great chance to escape from the cold for a few days, enjoy fellowship with fellow ELS Lutherans, and see some unexpected attractions – like the historic London Bridge, that was transported to and reassembled in Lake Havasu City in 1971.

Parish News

Giving

	Given	Needed	Difference
Nov – Dec:	\$14,638	\$13,040	+\$1,598
Year 2017:	\$71,092	\$73,863	-\$2,771

In the upcoming year we will have a budget with essentially the same giving needs as 2017. Please take the budget deficit of this past year in mind as you consider your giving for the coming year.

Upcoming Events

January

- 6 – Ladies' Bible Study
- 7 – The Festival of Epiphany
- 8 – Men's Fellowship
- 14 – Youth Group Bowling Outing
- 26 – Circuit 11 Pastor's Conference, Lake Havasu AZ
- 27 – Circuit 11 Women's Mission Rally, Lake Havasu AZ

February

- 14 – Ash Wednesday (this is the beginning of Lent)
- 21, 28 – Lent Midweek Services

As in past years, we will be able to participate in a preacher rotation for our Lent midweek services. This is a good opportunity to hear the different pastors of our fellowship preach while sitting in our own comfortable pews. We will also be holding meals before the Lent midweek services, starting on February 21st. There will be a sign-up sheet in the Bible class room if you would like to bring something.