

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

My hope is that all of you had a Merry Christmas, and that you are looking forward to the start of 2021. Since, I will be off the week that you receive this letter, I have prepared the following information for you, in advance.

The worship service you will see/hear/read today, is Bishop Arends' final sermon as Bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod. In his sermon, he tells the story of Simeon and Anna in the temple. Bishop Arends' will retire in 5 days, so his message also includes his parting words as bishop, to all of us.

My letter today provides information about the January 2021 worship services. Included, are the scripture passages that you and your family members can read to prepare for the services. The Sunday school children will note, that several of their Bible stories are taken from the Old Testament. During the month of January, we will learn about the prophets Jeremiah, Samuel, and Jonah. We will also read a story about God creating the world!

The gospel passage for next Sunday, January 3, is John 1:[1-9] 10-18. (The verses in brackets are optional reading, but you may find them helpful for understanding the passage in context.) You may also like to read the Old Testament lesson from Jeremiah 31:7-14. Children with Story Bibles can read "Speak up, Jeremiah," which tells about the prophet, Jeremiah. It is found on pages 148-149.

The gospel passage for Sunday, January 10, is Mark 1:4-11. Today is "Baptism of the Lord" Sunday. You may also like to read the Old Testament scripture passage from Genesis 1:1-5. Children with Story Bibles can read "How God Made Everything," which talks about the beginning of creation! It is found on pages 20-21.

The gospel passage for Sunday, January 17, is John 1:43-51. The Old Testament passage is 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]. Children with Story Bibles can read, "Samuel Tells a Hard Truth." The story is found on pages 106-107.

The gospel passage for Sunday, January 24, is Mark 1:14-20. The Old Testament passage is Jonah 3:1-5, 10. Children with Story Bibles, read about Jonah earlier this year. But, there is a lot to remember about this prophet! They can read a portion of the full story in, "A Second Chance for Jonah". It is found on pages 134-135. Or, they can read the full Jonah story on pages 132-135.

The gospel passage for Sunday, December 31, is Mark 1:21-28. Children with Story Bibles can learn about the prophetic books of the Bible in the story, "Prophets" on page 131.

As we begin a new year, I hope that reading these and other scripture passages, will assist you in your quiet times of prayer, Bible study, and contemplation.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy