



The Echoes

December 2023

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East Martin Christian Reformed Church



A View from the Pew

Shepherds, Sheep, the King, and the Lamb

One of the most encouraging and well-known passages in the Bible begins with these words, “The Lord is my shepherd...” (Psalm 23:1). Yet, how often do we think about the deeper meaning? This phrase makes us His sheep, doesn’t it? David, the writer of this psalm, knows all about shepherding and unruly sheep; and in his lifetime, David the sheep herder becomes David, king of Israel.

Let’s take a look at what the written word of God (both the old and new testaments) says about the Incarnate Word: a reversal, a *King* Who becomes a *Shepherd*...and a Lamb. Who is this Shepherd? What qualities characterize this Shepherd? What does all this mean for His sheep?



On earth it begins in a fairly insignificant village in Judea, Bethlehem by name, when a heavenly host of angels announces a baby’s birth (to outcasts, the riff raff of society, dirty, smelly shepherds living out in the fields nearby). Immediately these humble shepherds rush to see and worship the “Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Interestingly, this Child, Jesus, destined to cause the rising and falling of many, raises up those who believe in Him but literally becomes a stumbling block for those who disbelieve.

In reality, the “tables turn,” for Emmanuel, God with us, proclaims, “I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me” (John 10:14). “They, too, will listen to My voice...” so let us heed the words recorded in Hebrews 3:15a. “Today when you hear His voice, don’t harden your hearts.” Instead, “Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us and we are His. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (Psalm 100:3).

Totally, this Shepherd is no ordinary shepherd. Jesus Christ embodies multiple qualities that should motivate us to fall down before Him. First, He **seeks** the wandering ones individually. “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?” (Luke 15:14). Moreover, His heart, full of pity, yearns to **lead and guide**. Matthew tells us (9:36), “When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” The Shepherd Who guides, the Lord Who provides, the Voice Who brings peace in the storm.

Furthermore, He **cares**. Picture this: “He will **feed His flock** like a shepherd. He will **carry the lambs** in His arms, **holding them close** to His chest. He will **gently lead** the mother sheep with their young” (Isaiah 40:11). Yes, this truly is our “Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd **sacrifices** His life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

What blessings abound for the Good Shepherd’s sheep? Ultimately, what we have in our Shepherd is greater than what we don’t have in life, because this One, our Creator-Shepherd, **provides** eternal **salvation**. “So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32). “And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor” (1 Peter 5:4). “Then we, Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will thank you forever and ever, praising Your greatness from generation to generation” (Psalm 79:13).

Are we willing to follow this Shepherd? When we allow our Shepherd to guide us, we enjoy contentment and refreshment. When we choose to sin, however, we go our own way and cannot blame God for the environment we create for ourselves. Indeed, “He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His Name” (Psalm 23:3), and for Him that path of righteousness leads up a steep hill, to a cross at the top. We see that God displays His great love for us by sending His Son into the world to die on the cross as the ultimate, perfect, atoning sacrifice for our sins. This Shepherd becomes the sacrificial Lamb!

Therefore, (1) let us *believe* and, with the heavenly hosts, (2) *proclaim*

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men
on whom His favor rests.

Starting today, the benediction in Hebrews 13:20-21a needs to echo in our ears, “...may the God of peace—Who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep and ratified an eternal covenant with His blood—may He equip [us] with all [we] need for doing His will”!

In Contact With Council



- The Council meeting of December 12 was opened with devotions and prayer by Dave Mejeur. Dave read from Psalm 84:5-7 and a devotional.
- The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.
- Pulpit supply for December 31 is open for the morning and evening service.
- Deacons’ report. The offering schedule was made, supported and passed. The general fund is behind 23%; ministry shares is ahead by 13.5%.
- Building and Grounds: the roof unit for the narthex needs repairs. A motion was made, supported and passed to repair the roof unit.
- Five Council visits were made.
- A motion was made to adjourn. Supported and passed. Keith Smit closed in prayer and has devotions next month.

Bible Study Opportunities

Coffee Break

Coffee Break will resume on Wednesday, January 10, at 9:45 am. We will continue with our study of Embracing God's Grace by Elizabeth George.

God's gift of grace to you is total and complete. He's given it in abundance, and there's nothing you can add to it. Are you allowing His all-sufficient grace to transform you? In Colossians and Philemon you'll learn about ...

- the riches you possess in Christ
- the incredible spiritual power that resides within you
- how a thankful heart helps you to endure suffering
- how you can show God's grace to others

You'll find yourself spiritually enriched as you explore the heights and depths of God's grace, and discover how to extend it freely to others.

Please join us if you can. See Deb Smit for study material.

Ladies' Bible Study

Ladies' Evening Bible Study will resume on Monday, January 8, for a 12-week study called "Experiencing God".

God is inviting you to experience Him in an intimate love relationship through which He reveals to you His will, His ways, and His work. Through the biblical principles in this course, God can teach you how to...

- know when He is speaking to you
- recognize His activity around you
- adjust your life to Him and His ways
- identify what He wants to do through you
- respond to His activity in your life

When you recognize where God is working, you can join Him in what He is doing. Then you will experience God doing through you what only He can do.

There is a sign-up sheet in the narthex if you would like to join us. See Sue Tiemeyer if you have questions.

Men's Bible Study

Men's Bible Study will meet the first and third Wednesday evenings at 7 pm.

We will study the Sermon of the Mount by John Stott. The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best known part of the teaching of Jesus. It is his own description of what he wants his followers to be and to do. The sermon is found in Matthew's gospel toward the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Read the Bible in a Year

Have you ever wanted to read through the Bible in a year but felt it was a daunting task? Or have you desired to study with others from church but find yourself unable to make any of the Bible studies already in place?

This may be the perfect opportunity! Some of us have decided to read the Bible chronologically in 2024. We will have sheets available with the reading plan and it will also be listed on the website.

Hope you will join us! If you have any questions, see Libby Dendel.



*But the Lord will still show you this sign:
The young woman is pregnant and will give
birth to a son.
She will name him
IMMANUAL.*

Isaiah 7:14 ERV

May your heart be lifted in praise this Christmas for the perfect gift of Jesus and the hope He brings to our lives.

May you have a Merry Christmas
and a blessed New Year.

The Echoes Staff



Check Out the New Books in the Library

UNTIL THEN—CINDY WOODSMALL & ERIN WOODSMALL
 SHADOWS AT DUSK—ELIZABETH GODDARD (Missing in Alaska #2)
 KNOWING YOU—TRACIE PETERSON (Pictures of the Heart #3)
 HOPEFULLY EVER AFTER—BETH WISEMAN (Amish Bookstore #3)
 THIRD TARGET—JOEL ROSENBERG (A B COLLINS #1)
 THE FIRST HOSTAGE—JOEL ROSENBERG (A B COLLINS #2)
 WITHOUT WARNING—JOEL ROSENBERG (A B COLLINS #3)
 A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS—6 Historical Christmas Stories
 BECAUSE OF BETHLEHEM—MAX LUCADO
 WE THREE KINGS—A ROMANCE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION
 THE PRINCE AND THE PRODIGAL—JILL EILEEN SMITH
 SEASONS OF SORROW—TIM CHALLIES (The pain of loss and the comfort of God) - Donated

Calvin University presents The January Series

Listen | Learn | Discern

The award-winning January Series of Calvin University is one of the leading lecture and cultural arts series in the country. As we celebrate our 38th year, we continue a long tradition of providing a free liberal arts education for 15 weekdays in January (beginning January 15). If you can't make it to the in-person presentation, you can catch and listen to each presentation on your own device or join one of over 40 remote sites across the continent. We're excited for a month of cultivating conversations about important issues of the day in order to inspire cultural renewal and make us better global citizens in God's world. As a top-ranked Christian liberal arts university that equips students to be both curious and courageous, Calvin welcomes all to listen, learn and discern during the 2024 January series.

The live presentations are at 12:30 EST. For more information, visit calvin.edu/january, call (616) 526-7018 or email januaryseries@calvin.edu.



MARC

In January the Martin Area Resource Center could use the following items:

Shampoo/conditioner
 Bar soap/body wash
 Toothpaste/mouthwash
 Razors/deodorants
 Lotion, diapers and wipes

Chewy Macaroons

Yield: 4 1/2 dozen — prep: 5 minutes
 Bake 10 minutes/batch

5 1/3 cups flaked coconut
 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

In a bowl, combine all the ingredients. Drop 2 inches apart onto greased baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned. With a spatula dipped in water, immediately remove to wire racks.

November Tithes and Offerings

General Fund	\$26,473.40
Ministry Shares	4,574.00
Faith Promise	
East Martin Missions	260.00
Shaarda	2,827.00
Smit	2,817.00
Tiemeyer	2,397.00
Walker	2,342.00
Guatemala Orphanage	3,422.00
Benevolence	1,591.00
Education Assistance	1,825.00
Senior High Youth Group	830.00
GEMS	1,268.00
Cadets	250.00
Church Library	500.00
Vacation Bible School	120.00
Reframe Ministries	325.00
Resonate Global Mission	200.00
World Renew—DRS	250.00
World Renew—General	1,550.00
CRC Disability	104.00
Pine Rest	376.00
Mel Trotter Mission	224.00
East Martin Christian School	3,236.25
Kalamazoo Christian High School	1,500.00
Zion Christian School	273.00
Right to Life Education Fund	1,125.00
Martin Resource Center	1,225.00
Project Hope	280.00
Total	\$62,164.65

Offering Schedule for January

January 7: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Reframe Ministries/Back to God Ministries
 January 14: AM—East Martin Christian School; PM—Growing Hope Globally
 January 21: AM—Right to Life; PM—Benevolence
 January 28: AM—General Fund/Ministry Shares; PM—Martin Resource Center

Greeters

January 7: AM—Bruce and Renee Aukema, Tim Westendorp; PM—Marcia Bouman
 January 14: AM—Randy and Mary Bouman, Jon Kalkman; PM—Chase and Laura DeMaagd
 January 21: AM—Joe DeKoekkoek, Merrie Beth DenBoer, Wayne Leep; PM—Libby Dendel
 January 28: AM—Doug and Jeanne DeMann, Dave Mejeur; PM—Dennis and Linda DeYoung

Nursery

January 7: Laura DeMaagd
 January 14: Hailey and Kylee Tuinstra
 January 21: Riley and Addison Tuinstra
 January 28: Rebekah Westendorp

Library

January 7: Linda DeYoung
 January 14: Ida Westendorp
 January 21: Rena Lynema
 January 28: Linda DeYoung

Savory Party Bread

Yield: 6-8 servings
 Prep/total time: 30 minutes

1 unsliced round loaf (1 pound) sourdough bread
 1 pound Monterey Jack cheese, sliced
 1/2 cup butter, melted
 1/2 cup chopped green onions
 2 to 3 teaspoons poppy seeds

1. Cut the bread lengthwise and widthwise without cutting through the bottom crust. Insert cheese between cuts. Combine butter, onions, and poppy seeds, drizzle over the bread. Wrap in foil, place on a baking sheet.
2. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Unwrap and bake 10 minutes longer or until the cheese is melted.