



the CROSSWORD

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January 2018

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Coming Events

- **January 7**
Cookies & Cocoa planning meeting
- **January 10**
Choir and Bible study resumes
- **January 14**
Sunday School classes resume
- **February 3**
Equipping the Saints, St. Mark's, Cuero
- **February 4**
St. Peter's 2018 yearbooks available
- **February 14**
Ash Wednesday
- **February 25**
Annual congregational meeting



"Just A Little Christmas" was the title of the Christmas Program presented by the youth for St. Peter's members and guests on December 10. The annual program was attended by 92 people, who enjoyed brunch in the parish hall following the program.

January 7 scheduled for Youth Group cookies & cocoa planning meeting

The youth groups of St. Peter's are taking over the Sunday School hour on January 7. Youth of ALL ages are invited to join us for delicious treats, fellowship, crafts, and community service! We will meet in the fellowship hall following the worship service. Families are encouraged to bring their calendars to aide in planning events for Spring.

Dates set for pictures to be taken for St. Peter's pictorial directory

Dates to take the pictures of all congregational members have been set for February 9 – 10. Sign-up sheets for specific times on those two days will be announced and displayed sometime in January, with the Outreach Committee being in charge of this project.

Equipping the Saints event to be held in Cuero on February 3

Bluebonnet Conference's annual Equipping the Saints event for 2018 will be held on February 3 at St. Mark's, Cuero. The annual event, sponsored by the Bluebonnet Conference of Churches, offers a variety of workshops on congregational life. There is no charge for members of conference congregations to attend. Registration forms and materials will be available in January.

St. Peter's 2018 worship schedule for La Bahia Nursing Home

The schedule for leading 2018 worship at La Bahia Nursing Home in Goliad has been determined. St. Peter's will be leading 3p.m. Sunday worship services on March 18, June 10, September 2, and November 25.

St. Peter's mission is to grow as a Christian community in faith, worship and service.

Council sets date for check presentation, celebrate with Christmas meal

January 21 has been set as the date to present the check for the Octoberfest funds to a Cross Trails Ministry representative. The presentation will take place during the worship service. The council continued the discussion concerning church security. A guest speaker will be present to share more information at the January meeting.

Pastor Anne reported that individual registration for summer camp at Lutherhill has begun. Eva Nell Griffith reported on the upcoming Youth Group Planning meeting to be held in January. Kenneth Brand reported that 14 people attended the Adopt-a-Highway trash pick-up, and thanks to all for participating in this ministry. Worship and Music will have their next meeting on January 9.

Council welcomed incoming members and said thank you to outgoing members with a meal following the business meeting. Good food, Christmas music, and lively fellowship made this a fun and relaxed evening.

A BIG THANK YOU to all who made Advent/Christmas so special here at St. Peter's. To those who decorated, who planned the brunch and fellowship meal, who assisted with worship, who did the Advent Candle devotions, who helped with the Christmas Program, who provided special music, who attended worship, and all who added to the joy of this season! A special thanks to Lana Jarzombek for directing the Christmas program and to Kathy Albrecht for doing all those bulletins!

Bible study and choir practice to resume on January 10

The Wednesday night Bible Study resumes on January 10 at 7:30 p.m. to continue our study on Paul's letter to the Romans with "The Believer and the Government" (ch. 12 in the Resource Book) from Romans 13. Join us for study and discussion as we discover what the message then means for us today.

Dorothy Bowman, choir director, would like to extend a personal invitation to anyone who is interested in participating to join us for choir practice on Wednesday nights. We begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. and end at 7:30 p.m. No musical knowledge is required, just a willingness to sing God's praises and make a joyful noise! Come by and give us a try!

Information needed for 2018 Yearbooks

Preparation for publishing the 2018 Yearbook for St. Peter's has begun. In order to have correct information available in the yearbook, a clipboard with listings of members' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and emails will be placed on the table in the narthex. Please take a moment to check your information and any other family members' information. If all of the information is correct, please place a check mark beside the name. If corrections are necessary, draw a line through the incorrect information and clearly write the correct information. Your help with gathering correct information for the 2018 yearbook is greatly appreciated.

Pastor's vacation

Pastor Anne and Jerry will be on vacation December 26—January 2. Should a pastoral emergency arise that week, please contact Sherry Sanders at 361-655-0123 or Kathy Albrecht at 361-645-3912 or 361-935-6645, and they will contact a pastor.



"Just A Little Christmas" was presented by the youth for St. Peter's worship service on December 10

By Lana Jarzombek

The annual Christmas Program was presented during the worship service on December 10. The program entitled "Just a Little Christmas" was presented by our youth members and told the story of Jesus' Birth. The Congregation along with youth sang Christmas Songs throughout the program. A brunch was enjoyed by all following the Christmas Program. Cast members and Narrators were: Fischer Saxton, Payge Brown, Walker Wimberly, Addison Yendrey, Leighton Wunsch, Harley Jarzombek, Kaysa Wunsch, Garrison Jarzombek, Barrett Irwin, Gunner Brandes, Marleigh

Luker, Karolynn Youngblood, and Maebyn Wunsch, Conner Collins, Luke Taylor, Brady Taylor, Hunner Parma, Logan Youngblood, Krayleigh Irwin, Kora Brandes, Mallory Luker, Maely Brandes, Zayne Parma, Ainsley Yendrey, Mackenna Coleman-Diebel, and Kade Irwin.

Heartfelt thanks to everyone that was involved in and helped make the Christmas program a success. You are very much appreciated. St. Peter's is blessed to have many talented people that are willing to give of their time. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas!



January

2018

Tue Dec 26, 2017—Tue Jan 2, 2018**Pastor's Vacation****Fri Dec 29, 2017****Church office closed****Sun Dec 31, 2017****9am Worship service****Mon Jan 1, 2018****NEW YEAR'S DAY—church office closed****Sun Jan 7, 2018****9am Worship service****10:15am Youth group cookies and cocoa planning meeting****Tue Jan 9, 2018****2pm Bible study for Women of the ELCA****3pm Women of the ELCA meeting
6:30pm Worship Committee meeting****Wed Jan 10, 2018****6:30pm Choir
7:30pm Bible Study****Sun Jan 14, 2018****9am Communion service
10:15am Sunday School
10:15am Confirmation class****Wed Jan 17, 2018****9am Lutheran World Relief workday
6:30pm Choir
7:30pm Bible Study****Thu Jan 18, 2018****6:30pm Congregation Council meeting****Sun Jan 21, 2018****9am Contemporary Worship service****10am Usher and Greeter meeting****10:15am Sunday School****10:15am Confirmation class****Wed Jan 24, 2018****6:30pm Choir****7:30pm Bible Study****Sun Jan 28, 2018****9am Communion service****10:15am Sunday School****Wed Jan 31, 2018****6:30pm Choir****7:30pm Bible Study**

Sign-up for providing flowers on 2018 Flower Calendar

The 2018 calendar for providing flowers for the altar is posted on the bulletin board in the parish hall.

If the flowers given for a particular Sunday are given in memory or in honor of particular persons, please inform the church office if you wish this information to be included in the bulletin for that Sunday.

St. Peter's plans for 50th camp service weekend to be held in 2018

St. Peter's 50th annual camp service weekend will be held at Camp Lutherhill near La Grange. Aldon Bade announced at the congregational meeting, held on December 3, that a date for a weekend in 2018 in April or May will be set soon. The project that St. Peter's will be assigned has not been finalized, but updated information will be shared when it is available.

WOMEN OF THE ELCA



St. Peter's Women's Bible study and meeting to be held January 9

Bible Study for the Women of the ELCA will be held on Tuesday, January 9 at 2p.m. The Bible study, from the January/February issue of the *Gather* magazine, is *Multiple meanings: Learning from other interpretations*, Session One: *Washing hands with distant hearts*, with Bible text from Mark 7:1-12. All women are invited to join us for study, discussion and fellowship. If you do not have the *Gather* magazine and would like to subscribe, please contact Linda Dornburg for subscription information. For a copy of the Bible study, please call Kathy Albrecht at the church office.

St. Peter's 2018 Women of the ELCA officers installed and committee chairs named

Officers for St. Peter's Women of the ELCA, that were elected at the November meeting, were installed during the worship service on December 17. Officers for 2018 include Kathy Albrecht, president, Dorothy Bowman, vice-president, Jackie Gardiner, secretary, and Eva Nell Griffith, treasurer.

Committee chairs for 2018 were selected at a meeting on December 12. Those serving as committee chairs are Linda Dornburg, discipleship, Ruby Jank and Jackie Gardiner, justice, and Brenda Bade, stewardship. Please contact these women if you want to serve on a committee.

Items needed for Lutheran World Relief care kits

St. Peter's Women of the ELCA continues collecting items for personal care kits and baby care kits.

Most needed items for personal care kits are:

- **Bath-size towels**, (between 20" x40" and 27" x52") light-weight, dark color recommended
- **Bath-size bars of soap**, (4-5 oz.) any brand, in original wrapping
- **Sturdy combs**, (wide tooth preferred)

Most needed items for the baby care kits are:

- **Long- or short-sleeved gowns, sleepers (without feet) or pajama sets**
- **Jackets, sweaters or sweatshirts**
- **Bath-size bars of soap**, (4-5 oz.) (mild soaps preferred), in original wrapping

If there are any questions regarding Lutheran World Relief donations or kit items, please contact Linda Dornburg, coordinator for St. Peter's Women of the ELCA Lutheran World Relief.

Women of the ELCA Bluebonnet Conference Spring Gathering

Date: Saturday, March 10, 2018

Place: St. Peter's Lutheran Church

Time: 8:30 a.m.—3 p.m.

Theme: Spiritual Renewal

Bible verse: *"Those Who Wait for the Lord Shall Renew Their Strength."*— Isaiah 40:31

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Lucinda Zesch, chaplain for Knopp Healthcare and Rehab, Fredericksburg

Guest Speaker and Physical Offering Recipient: Theresa Klacman, Restoration House Ministries, Victoria

Physical Offering Items: College Rule Spiral Notebooks, Journals, Pens, Envelopes, Stamps, New Ladies Footies, Ankle Socks, Booties, Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Liquid Laundry Detergent, Dawn Dish Detergent, and Oven Mitts

Registration forms will be available in January.

Prayer shawls for 2018 Synod Assembly voting members that will elect new ELCA bishop

At the Synod Assembly in 2018, the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA will elect a new bishop. Anyone that can knit or crochet is invited to create prayer shawls to be gifted to voting members as they participate in the election process. As you create with yarn, pray for those making important decisions for the future of the church. You are welcome to knit or crochet, and use any pattern you are comfortable using. Shawls should be approximately 15 inches wide by 60 inches in length, depending on the style. Our goal is 400 shawls from across the synod. A box has been placed by the open closet in the narthex to receive the finished prayer shawls. On March 10, 2018, St. Peter's Women of the ELCA will be holding the 2018 Bluebonnet Spring Gathering. The completed shawls from the Bluebonnet Conference will be collected at this event. If you have any questions, please contact Kathy Albrecht at the church office, 645-2922.

Pop tops are being collected for companion synod in Costa Rica

Collection containers for pull tabs from soda cans have been placed on the table by the open closet in the narthex. These pull tabs (or "pop tops") are used by members of our companion synod in Costa Rica, Iglesia Luterana Costarricense, to make purses and other crafts to supplement their income. The Women of the ELCA will be taking the tabs to the Southwestern Texas Women's Convention that will be held on South Padre Island in September 2018.



St. Peter's Christmas caroling brings joy and blessings

There are blessings and then there are "BLESSINGS", but you have never been so blessed as when you bless others. St. Peter's caroling group had a wonderful turnout on Sunday, December 17. We first went to LaBahia Nursing home and as we entered, there were at least 15 residents waiting. As we began to sing, other residents came down the hall to join us. Some could only listen, but there were others who joined us as we sang. We then went to eat and enjoyed conversation and good food. Next, we split into two groups, one staying in Goliad and the other group heading into the area around the church. It was a wonderful day to spread good cheer. If you missed out this year, please plan to join us for next year's caroling. Believe me, you will be blessed. Thank you to all who gave of their time and talent to make this endeavor happen.

Christmas project helps local family

By Jill Wiggins

A thank you to all who generously gave gift cards, clothes, toys and heaters to the Baladez family in Goliad. St. Peter's church family does many special things to share what God has so graciously first given us.

Notice of Annual Congregational Meeting

The annual congregational meeting of St. Peter's Lutheran Church will be held following the 9 a.m. worship service on February 25, 2018.

Congregation meeting held December 3

On December 3, 2017, the congregation met after worship for "part 1" of the annual meeting (part 2 is February 25, 2018.)

A budget for 2018 was approved by the congregation. The following actions were taken at the meeting:

- * Elected by acclamation were Jackie Gardiner as financial secretary, Valerie Albrecht and Jackie Gardiner to serve on the memorial committee, Brenda Bade as memorial treasurer, June Bethke as perpetual care treasurer, and Jamie Friedrichs as church treasurer.
- * New members elected to serve on Church Council were Ashford Taylor and Trey Wimberly.
- * Thanks were expressed to Billy Dornburg, Dalton Dornburg and Beverly Martin, whose terms on the church council are completed this year.
- * The new name for what was formerly known as "the picnic area" was voted on and now is officially *Das Versamein Platz* (*The Gathering Place*)



Updates on Campbell soup labels and box tops for education

St. Peter's Women of the ELCA have been collecting the Campbell soup labels and box tops for education coupons since approximately 2008. The Campbell soup labels for education will no longer be collected, since the company will be discontinuing their support of this money raising project for schools in January 2018.

At the church, on the kitchen counter there is a container for collecting "Box Tops for Education." If you have been contributing to this project, please continue to do so, and we will deliver the box tops for education coupons to the school.

Thank you for your support of St. Peter's projects.

EPIPHANY

Epiphany is the climax of the Advent/Christmas Season and the 12 Days of Christmas, which are usually counted from the evening of December 25th until the morning of January 6th, which is the Twelfth Day.

The term epiphany means "to show," "to make known," or even "to reveal." On January 6 we remember the coming of the wise men bringing gifts to visit the Christ child, who by so doing "reveal" Jesus to the world as Lord and King. The rest of the Epiphany season, which lasts until Ash Wednesday, celebrates the revelation of Christ as Lord in our lives today as it remembers events that revealed him as God's Son during his ministry. The last Sunday of Epiphany is celebrated as Transfiguration Sunday.

The Wise Men or Magi who brought gifts to the infant Jesus were the first Gentiles to acknowledge Jesus as "King" and so were the first to "show" or "reveal" Jesus to a wider world as the incarnate Christ. This act of worship by the Magi, which corresponded to Simeon's blessing that this child Jesus would be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2: 32), was one of the first indications that Jesus came to all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

O God, you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory. Amen.

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Isaiah 60:3, NRSV



St. Peter's Staff

The Rev. Anne Kolmeier
Pastor

Kathy Albrecht
Church Office Secretary

Dorothy Bowman
Organist and Choir
Director

**Congregation
Council**

David Bowman
(term ends 12/31/18)

Kenneth Brand
(term ends 12/31/18)

Eva Nell Griffith
(term ends 12/31/19)

Sandra Post
(term ends 12/31/18)

Sherry Sanders
(term ends 12/31/19)

Ashford Taylor
(term ends 12/31/20)

Terrell Wiggins
(term ends 12/31/19)

Trey Wimberly
(term ends 12/31/20)

The Rev. Anne Kolmeier
Pastor (ex-officio)



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS:

- 1-6 Amaly Beutnagel
- 1-6 Linda Hartman
- 1-6 Janice Seiler
- 1-8 Norman Seiler
- 1-9 Brady Beutnagel
- 1-10 Harley Jarzombek
- 1-11 Pastor Anne Kolmeier
- 1-11 Jarrett Yendrey
- 1-17 Ryan Luker
- 1-18 Carl Brandes
- 1-18 Russell Schmidt
- 1-21 W.A. Wimberly, Jr.
- 1-24 Conner Collins
- 1-26 Lynleigh Griffith



JANUARY ANNIVERSARY:

1-10-04 Lana and Gary Jarzombek

If any listings of birthdays or anniversaries are incorrect, or if a listing is missing, please contact the church office at 645-2922 or office@stpetersander.org



Welcome to the world, PAISLEY EVELYN POST! Paisley was born in Victoria to Jaron and Ashley Post on December 18, 2017 weighing 8 pounds and 3 oz. Paisley is also welcomed by her big brother, Parker, her grandparents, Paul and Sandra Post, and great grandma Elaine Post.

Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship: 9:00 a.m.
 Sunday School: 10:15 a.m.—11:00 a.m. (Sept. - May)
 Holy Communion: second, fourth, and fifth Sundays of each month, throughout the Easter season, and on all festivals

**St. Peter's Ministry Fund Update
Through November 30, 2017**

Ministry fund beginning balance, January 1, 2017	\$24,057.45
Offerings	\$180,451.70
Cost of ministries	\$140,434.19
Ministry fund ending balance, November 30, 2017	\$64,074.96

Note: St. Peter's Ministry Fund (previously known as the current fund and the general operating fund) includes all of St. Peter's regular, budgeted ministries, including ELCA Mission Support. It does not include designated gifts to the building fund, memorials, or other non-budgeted designated gifts.

**ELCA Missionary
Supported by
St. Peter's**

The Rev. Dr. Carolyn Schneider
 #3 To Fung Shan Road
 Shatin, N.T.
 Hong Kong, SAR
 carolyn.schneider@elca.org



St. Peter's Ander



Joan Albrecht – wife of Wayne Albrecht
Allene Bethke – mother-in-law of June Bethke
Dawn Butler – sister of Lana Jarzombek and Ronda Irwin
Rachel Carbajal – friend of Wendi Yendrey
Laura Emmons – friend of Pat McDonald
Denise Engle – friend of Amy Wilburn
Pamela Evans – friend of Allison Gerhardt
Joyce Foster – grandmother of Shelby Foster
Robbie Friedrichs – friend of June Bethke
Ainsley Garza – cousin of Arlene DeForest and Eva Nell Griffith
Barry Geary – member of St. Peter's
Allison Gerhardt – member of St. Peter's
Kerry Giles – son-in-law of Sherry and Sandy Sanders
Rebecca Graves – infant great-niece of Joyce Franklin, friend of Alvin and Arlene DeForest
Wilma Grupe – aunt of Karie Wimberly
Milton Haas – friend of Alvin and Arlene DeForest
Stefani Hargrove – friend of Karen Klinkerman
The Rev. Bill Hassel – retired Bluebonnet Conference pastor
Dale Henderson – father of Margaret Luker
Mark Hilbrich – friend of the Posts
Lyla Holziemer – great niece of Ina DeForest
Vanita Ann Hausmann Homer – friend of Brenda and Aldon Bade
Betty Jacob – friend of June Bethke
Ryan Janak – eight year old nephew of Leo Henke
Nora Karl – great-grandmother of Shelby Foster
Athalee Koehler – mother of Randy Koehler
Joe Ladeairous – father of Regina Calhoun
Herbie Maurer – brother of Brenda Bade
Vernette McMullen – member of St. Peter's
Ruth Pieper – friend of the community and member of St. Luke's, Schroeder
Allen Pollard – father of Karie Wimberly
Mary Poppert – sister of Ina DeForest and Alvin DeForest
Jose Reyes – friend of Shelby Foster
Marcus Rezendez – friend of Amy Wilburn

Homebound:

Barry Geary, 1403 Gohmert Rd., Cuero, TX 77954,
phone 361-275-5591

Vernette McMullen, 510 Perth Street, Victoria, TX 77904
phone 361-485-0390

James Rung – five year old son of Greta Henke's friend
Katherine Sauer – grandmother of Jarrett Yendrey
Bonnie Staha – friend of Jamie Friedrichs
Barbara Stall – cousin of Arlene DeForest and Eva Nell Griffith
Patricia Stanley – co-worker of Gayle Albrecht
Chuck Taylor – father of Ashford Taylor
Wayne Timmerman – friend of Pam and Ted Long
Victor Vargas – four year old nephew of Alyssa, Luke Abrameit's wife
Family of Willie Mae Vaughn – mother of Susan Searcy, (Susan is sister-in-law to Geraldine Sturm)
James White – friend of Allen and Ruby Jank
Sharon Wilborn – friend of Beverly Martin
Mike Wilburn – member of St. Peter's
G.T. Yendrey – grandfather of Jarrett Yendrey
Zander York – member of St. Peter's grandson of Bob and Nancy Gerhardt
Buddy Young – friend of Allen and Ruby Jank

Thank you—

St. Peter's members —
 Best wishes for a holiday season filled with peace and joy. Thank you all for All the Blessings you have given to us. We are truly grateful.

Thank you so much,
 Brenda and Amanda Garrett



Start the New Year with
Prayer



Christian Sympathy is expressed to the family of Merton Lloyd Ideus, father of Sherry Sanders (Sandy) and Jonathan Ideus (Rhonda), grandfather of Chris Ideus (Loni) and Danielle Egg (Adam), who passed away on November 26. Funeral service was held on November 29 at St. John Evangelical Church in Meyersville, with burial at St. John Evangelical Cemetery.

"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deuteronomy 33:27a

Cross Trails Ministry Mother/Teen Daughter Retreat to be held February 2-4

Come together at Ebert Ranch on February 2-4 and learn how God uses some of the most unlikely people, including "bad girls" to share who God is in the world. Together we will look at what God called these women to do and how God is still calling us today. Bring your mother or daughter, in 6-12 grade, and enjoy a fun weekend of Bible studies, worships and your choice of several fun camp activities like creative crafts, horseback riding, the ropes course and more! You won't want to miss this one. There may be some "dangerously" fun surprises in store for this retreat!

For complete information and registration forms, check out crosstrails.org and under retreats click "Programed Retreats." Early bird registration, for mothers \$125 and daughters \$85, ends January 19, 2018.



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Goliad, TX 77963-3414

Phone/Fax: 361-645-2922
E-mail: office@stpetersander.org
www.stpetersander.org

The Rev. Anne Kolmeier, pastor
Phone: 361-676-4799
E-mail: revsplca@gmail.com

Worship Leaders for January

ALTAR GUILD

Sherry Sanders and Lindsey Youngblood

GREETERS

Brenda Bade and Brenda Foil

USHERS

Aldon Bade and Kenneth Brand

OFFERING COUNTERS

June Bethke and Linda Dornburg

MINISTER OF HOSPITALITY

Beverly Martin

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Beverly Martin and Marilyn Morris

FLOWERS

1-7 Jarzombek Family
1-14 open
1-21 open
1-28 open





Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Christmas, 2017

Dear Friends,

As I write, it is the second week of Advent and the last week of classes at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong before our Christmas break. It has been a very busy semester because we had so many special activities commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Maybe you did, too. On October 31, there was a huge ecumenical worship service held at Elizabeth Stadium in Hong Kong, with 2,000 worshipers in attendance, including those invited especially from the Roman Catholic Church. If you would like to see it, you can click on this link to the website of the Lutheran World Federation, which televised the service to represent the Asia region:

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/reformationdaylive>.

(You can move the "Live Broadcast" video to the right place by clicking on the "play" arrow and then dragging the red dot to 8:30.) The service is in Cantonese, but you can open an English version of the order of service and sermon by scrolling down to "Reformation Day Live Program" and clicking on "Asia Region". However, if you want to experience what life would be like for you much of the time if you lived in Hong Kong, just listen to the service in Cantonese and open the sermon in Chinese. You might find yourself bewildered.

I teach in English because my students are from several different countries, but I am surrounded by Cantonese, the dialect of Chinese spoken in Hong Kong, but not by me. Since I do not understand spoken or written Cantonese, I often find myself bewildered. For example, last week I was on the bus, riding to church, when a parade passed by. It was a long one, with drums and many marchers wearing t-shirts and carrying signs. I looked for some recognizable words or characters on the signs but found none. So the parade faded away behind us, and I don't know what it was about.

I'm grateful that many signs in Hong Kong are bilingual. I enjoyed this one near the MTR (subway) station close to my house:



Some signs are even entirely in English, like this one near the 10,000 Buddhas temple complex just around the corner from the post office:



I met some fake Buddhist monks before I saw the sign (or maybe there was a sign in Chinese and I missed it!). They wanted HK\$100 (around US\$15) in exchange for a blessing. I assured them that I was deeply blessed already.

We all have been blessed, including the Reformers, the protesting marchers, and the fake monks, because at Christmas God gave us a sign that people of any language can see, and it is not a sign of prohibition or warning but of promise: The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy

for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

The sign of a Savior: a baby in an animal's feed-box. "Do not be afraid," they said. Here God wraps himself in our weakness, inadequacy, and confusion, and makes it his own. These things cannot separate us from the God who loves us and is making us and all things right in himself. It is in him that we are all held together, in spite of language barriers. That's the good news of great joy for all the people that I want to share with you and celebrate this Christmas.

Carolyn Schneider

Associate Professor of Church History
The Lutheran Theological Seminary,
50 To Fung Shan Road, Shatin, N.T.
Hong Kong SAR, China

P.S. Your support makes a world of difference. Here is how to give:

1. By check: Make payable to "ELCA Global Church Sponsorship" with "Carolyn Schneider (GCS2016)" in the memo line. Give through your synod office or mail your check to:

ELCA Global Church Sponsorship
ELCA Gift Processing Center
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

2. By credit or debit card: See <https://community.elca.org/HongKong> or call 800-638-3522 and specify "Carolyn Schneider (GCS2016)".

3. By automatic monthly bank withdrawal, or to establish a covenant of prayer, communication and support: Contact 800-638-3522, ext. 2657, or globalchurch@elca.org.