

“No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.” (Mark 2:22)

I enjoy an occasional glass of a good, dry red wine. I like the way that it smells. I like the way that I can detect different flavors when I swish it around in my mouth. And I like the way that the tannins make my cheeks pucker. I tend to like the California wines best—a good Cabernet from Napa or an Old Vine Zinfandel from Lodi. But I’m no wine snob. I’m willing to try anything. I’ve found many inexpensive wines that are as good as or better than any of the expensive wines that I’ve tasted. And I’ve often been pleasantly surprised by a new wine that someone suggested to me.

In the Bible verse above, Jesus is talking about new wine. His comments were a response to people who were criticizing him. They were criticizing him because he didn’t speak or act like the Pharisees and the other teachers of his day. In fact, he was often challenging their interpretations of Scripture and their manmade rules and traditions. They were trying to defend the old order of things. But Jesus was doing something new. And the best analogy that he could think of for his new way of teaching was the analogy of new wine.

In first century Israel, they didn’t have glass bottles and corks to store their wine. When the new crop of grapes was harvested, they would squeeze out the juice and pour it into watertight animal skin pouches. And those skins had to be new. Because when the grape juice began to ferment into wine, the gases from the fermentation process would expand the skin and stretch it out.

An old wineskin was one that had already been stretched to its limit. Once it was empty, it could be used to store other liquids, like water or milk, but it could never be used to store wine again. If you tried to put new wine into an old, stretched-out wineskin, the fermentation process would burst the skin, and both the wine and the skin would be ruined. So Jesus was saying, “Of course I’m doing things differently than the Pharisees and the other teachers. My ministry is different because it’s new. Through me, God is doing a new thing in the world.”

The new thing that God was doing through Jesus was built upon the traditions of the Old Testament. In fact, every law and ritual in the Old Testament was pointing to Jesus. But the mission of Jesus was a completely new expression of those old traditions. The old animal sacrifices were preparing the world for the greatest sacrifice of all time—the death of Jesus on the cross for the sins of all humanity. And when Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, he proved that the new message of the cross was the true interpretation of everything that had come before him.

Now we live as people of the new message. We are people of the cross. If we believe that Jesus died on the cross for us, then our sins are completely forgiven. And by the grace of God, we have the promise of eternal life in heaven. And because we believe in these promises of God, we are living new lives. The Holy Spirit is living inside of us, changing us into the people that God wants us to be.

We are like new wine! No matter how old we are in physical age, we are always new in Jesus Christ. The world says, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” But Jesus says, “Watch me.” When I was in my first congregation, a ninety year old man called the church one day and said that he wanted to be baptized. He had been listening to our services on the radio and he had been changed by the gospel message that he heard every week.

We baptized that man and he became a faithful member of our church until the day that he died. And when he did die, he left a sizable bequest to the church, to be used for overseas missions and local outreach programs. His legacy lived on long after he was gone from this earth. God did something new with that man in the ninth decade of his life! And he can do something new with you right here and right now.

How will God use you in the year to come? How will the Holy Spirit change your heart? What new thing will Jesus do in your life? I don't know. But I know how you can prepare for the work of God in your life. You can prepare by being in worship regularly. You can prepare by reading the Word of God every day. And you can prepare by communing with God in prayer every day.

No matter what your chronological age might be, you can say to Jesus, "I want to be a new wineskin. I want you to pour your new wine into me. I want to grow and stretch and do new things for you this year." Jesus will never ignore a prayer like that. And if you pray that prayer, you will never be the same. May God bless you as you embark on the exciting journey of a new year in Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen!

Pastor Shields

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*If you have any special announcements for Pastor to make during his taping, please get them to the office **by Thursday**. Mailing does not guarantee we will get them before the Saturday taping. Call and leave a message, email, or drop off a note.*

COUNCIL SUMMARY: Meeting December 8, 2020

November minutes were approved. Financial reports approved subject to audit.

Pastor's report – 10 worship services (4 Saturdays/5 Sundays/1 Wednesday), 10 calls, 6 meetings, 11 appointments, 15 Bible studies/classes/prayer groups, 1 baptism (Elijah James Burritt). Other: Photo & interview for Mobile Food Pantry, Mobile Food Pantry, Thanksgiving Eve service. Ahead: Advent services, exchanging pulpits with Pastor Matt Shields and 3 Christmas Eve worship services.

Administrator's report – Average attendance for November: 20 on Saturday, 33 at Sunday worship and 113 views of the service, 54 views sermon only, Thanksgiving Eve 24 in person and 84 views.

Financial report – At this time expenses exceed giving by -\$2000.

Property report – a tree has been planted and Memorial has paid for it.

Service & Mission – benevolence schedule has been paid in full.

Youth report – special Advent mailing will be sent to kids.

Outreach & Fellowship – making phone calls and trying to make connections with all members.

Council cont.

Worship report – reservations are coming in the for 3 Christmas Eve services.

Council agreed to post the Virtual Christmas Tree Choir to our website.

The meeting ended with prayer concerns.

First Family News

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

<i>Diane Wampler 1/4</i>	<i>Kari Richardson 1/19</i>
<i>Ray Swanson 1/4</i>	<i>Madelyn Holland 1/20</i>
<i>Sharon Saunders 1/5</i>	<i>Marvin Hartz 1/22</i>
<i>Ambi Bopes 1/10</i>	<i>Dick Mills 1/24</i>
<i>Dianne Van Drew 1/12</i>	<i>John Baird 1/26</i>
<i>Lynne Martin 1/13</i>	<i>Bettie Jo May 1/29</i>
<i>Dale Fiste 1/13</i>	<i>Janelle Balensiefen 1/29</i>
<i>Ken Schoof 1/13</i>	<i>Leo DiPietro 1/29</i>
<i>Pam Cain 1/13</i>	<i>Bob Pierson 1/30</i>
<i>Peter Garramone 1/17</i>	<i>Jo Anne Kloepping 1/30</i>
<i>Allister Swanson 1/17</i>	

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

<i>Tony Bonucci 2/2</i>	<i>Abe Adamow 2/22</i>
<i>Gary Pierson 2/3</i>	<i>Linda Fine 2/23</i>
<i>Judy Shofner 2/7</i>	<i>Sue Cooper 2/24</i>
<i>Kevin Scruggs 2/8</i>	<i>Sue Pierson 2/24</i>
<i>Elizabeth Feuer 2/9</i>	<i>Ean Frazier 2/24</i>
<i>Anna June Ohlson 2/14</i>	<i>Loren Cook 2/26</i>
<i>Kode Johnson 2/18</i>	<i>Stephanie DiPietro 2/26</i>
<i>Janette Dunn 2/19</i>	
<i>Marilyn Nelson 2/22</i>	

Our Sympathy

To Mike Hult, his brother, Dennie passed away on Dec. 27th after his struggle with cancer.



Baptism

Harlan Paul Ohlson

Son of David & Emalie Ohlson was baptized on

Sunday, Dec. 6, 2020

This is the same date that his daddy was baptized in 1981.

THIS NEWSLETTER!

Since many regular activities are still on hold, it was decided to put January & February events in this newsletter. Should anything develop or change, we will get those in our weekly announcements.

New Members

Pastor Bill will not hold a New Member class this year, but if anyone is interested in joining 1st Lutheran, please talk to him.

ALTAR GUILD TEAMS

January – Mary Ann Smith, Dianne Van Drew

February – Karen May, Julia Cain, Lani Swinford

March – June Ohlson, Cindy Pierson, Laurie Anderson

JANUARY ANNIVERSARY

Dale & Barb Fiste 1/27

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

2/12 June & Gail Ohlson
2/13 Pete and Karen May
2/17 Gary & Cindy Pierson
2/17 Dave & Bernice Schuetz
2/25 Jim & Sue Scruggs

Continued prayers for:

John Purvis, Janette Dunn, Mary Hull, Ruth Eklof, Kate Newby, Pat Anderson, Eva Coats, Sara Himes.

Annual Reports

Annual reports for each committee are due ASAP, please. They will be rather brief this year, but we still need to have them.

First Lutheran Church

January & February 2021

**Our Sympathy to
Glenda & Alan Knotek**
Alan's cousin-in-law, Fred Nelson passed away from COVID on Dec. 24th.

Our Sympathy to
Dale Fiste, as his sister, Norma Jean Pearson passed away 12/30.

Watching From Home?

Bags of pre-filled communion cups and wafers are available if you are worshipping at home and want to participate in communion. Please stop by and pick some up.

First Lutheran Yearbook/Directory

Please check your information in the church yearbook/directory and let the church office know of any updates or changes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The following dates are open yet this year:
January 10, 17, 24 & 31 February 7 & 28.

Flowers need to be in the sanctuary before 9:30am on Saturdays.

Please call the office if you would like to schedule one of the above weekends.

*Hospitalized recently:
Eva Coats recently broke her ankle and spent some time at Liberty Village in rehab. She is back in her home now.*

2021 Wall Calendars
are available in the back of the sanctuary or on the table outside the offices.

Compliments of Fiocchi/Jensen Funeral Home

Ash Wednesday Service
February 17, 2021
7:00 pm



Lenten Services begin
Wednesday February 24 -
March 24, 2021 - 7:00 pm

Pastor's Bible Study



11:00am Wednesdays
6:00pm Thursdays

Come, join one of these studies!
(beginning again January 6 & 7th)

THANK YOU!

The family of Merle Polson would like to say "Thank You" for all the prayers, cards, messages, and words of encouragement as he fought the battle with cancer and was rewarded with the gift of everlasting life with our Lord. His church family meant the world to him, and we were so comforted by your many acts of kindness to our whole family. Blessings to you all!

Pat Polson, Gay & Dave Little, Sharon Dyer & Rich Still, Jennifer & Jeff Jaques