

The Christian Origins of Groundhog Day?

The word "holiday" is actually a contraction of "holy day," and most of our secular "holidays" were originally "holy days" in the Christian Church Year. If you check the Church Year calendar on pages x-xi in the front of *Lutheran Service Book* you will see that there are two festivals of the Church Year during February, The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord on February 2nd, and the festival of St. Matthias, Apostle on February 24th. For one of these "holy days" there is also an American "holiday" on the same date: The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord and Groundhog Day both fall on February 2nd. That's not just a coincidence, because believe it or not even Groundhog Day was originally a Christian holy day!

The Old Testament background of The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord is found in Leviticus 12:2-8:

Say to the Israelites: "A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the

sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. . . . When the days of her purification . . . are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. . . . If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering."

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

This also explains why the festival of The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord falls on



The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord as recorded in Luke 2:22-24 is depicted in this 1530 woodcut from a book of Martin Luther's sermons.

So, in ancient Israel on the 40th day after giving birth to a son the mother would go to the temple at Jerusalem and present an offering for ritual cleansing. This is the background of and reason for Joseph and Mary's actions in Luke 2:22-24:

February 2nd, because it became customary to celebrate Christ's birth on December 25th, and 40 days from that date is February 2nd.

It is revealing that Mary and Joseph apparently could not afford a lamb for the offering, and so instead presented

the alternate offering allowed the poor, “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” This shows the poverty of this couple and their Child, as St. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:9: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty you might become rich.”

The other theological significance for your salvation of The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord is found in Galatians 4:4-5: “When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.” It was for your salvation that Jesus lived out on earth a perfect, holy life, perfectly fulfilling all the will and law of God, including these Old Testament requirements for the ritual purification of His mother and His presentation at the temple on the 40th day after His birth.

In Matthew 17:24-27, in the miracle of a coin found in a fish’s mouth for Jesus to pay the temple tax, He explains that as the Son of God He is by right exempt from such requirements. Nevertheless, He pays the tax in order “not to give offense.” That is also why The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord is significant for you and your salvation, because His perfect obedience of this and all the requirements of God’s law is

credited to you. As Jesus tells John the Baptist at His Baptism—from which by right He also was exempt—“It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

Martin Luther’s hymn “In Peace and Joy I Now Depart” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #938) was probably written for The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord in 1524, and several of Luther’s sermons for this occasion are recorded, in which he explains the significance of this festival for our salvation, including these comments from 1534:

Christ placed Himself under the Law even though He was not obligated. There is consolation for us on this festival of Christ’s presentation at the temple and His gracious compliance under the Law. . . He lowers Himself and endures such an unnecessary obedience. . . He did it all for our sake. . . (Sermons of Martin Luther, House Postils, Vol. 1, p. 296).

At one time The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord was a major Christian festival, celebrated with great fanfare and a set of elaborate customs, in a manner similar to the way we still observe Christmas and Easter. One tradition was a candlelight procession to the church before the worship service—or “mass”—was held on this festival, and therefore it came to be called “Candlemas,” a name still commonly used for this day in many parts of the world.

As with Christmas and Easter, many other customs and traditions arose related to Candlemas. Instead of dyeing Easter eggs, for Candlemas families would make candles. And instead of Christmas fruitcake, they would eat special foods for Candlemas, such as Crepe Suzette in France and tamales in Mexico.

One Candlemas folk tradition was that the weather on this date would determine the remainder of the winter season. In this vein Luther describes Candlemas as the time “when spring is bursting forth” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 20, p. 166).

An old English rhyme says:

*If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter has another flight.
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Winter will not come again.*

And an ancient Scottish proverb declares:

*If Candlemas be bright and clear,
There’ll be two winters in the year.*

In much of Europe a fox, bear, or badger’s actions on Candlemas was thought to predict the weather. There was a German rhyme:

*When the bear at Candlemas
His shadow sees
For another six weeks
Back in his hole he flees.*

This tradition was brought to America by the “Pennsylvania Dutch,” with the German bear replaced by the American groundhog, and that is how our Groundhog Day actually originated. So, although it is now an entirely secular “holiday,” even Groundhog Day actually started as a Christian “holy day”!

The surprising Christian origin even of Groundhog Day is a small example of how Christianity has permeated and influenced every aspect of our culture. More importantly, societal values we cherish, such as justice, tolerance, and care for the poor, needy, weak, and vulnerable, stem from this Christian heritage. While it is perhaps not significant that we have largely forgotten the Christian origins of Groundhog Day, when we as a nation forget the Christian foundations of our society and drift further and further from our spiritual roots we will eventually lose the distinctive Christian values that have been such a blessing—something sadly already happening in many countries with a Christian heritage, and to some extent in our nation too.

In addition to Luther’s hymn, *Lutheran Service Book* includes another hymn specifically for The Purification of Mary and the Presentation of Our Lord, #519, “In His Temple Now Behold Him,” as well as propers for the festival including this Collect of the Day:

Almighty and ever-living God, as Your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh, grant that we may be presented to You with pure and clean hearts; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Pastor Kevin Vogts

Crossnotes

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Number 1

BUDGET REPORT

Holy Cross Meets 2012 Budget

In 2011 many members of Holy Cross were impacted by the flood, which also caused our congregation to essentially be closed for four months. As 2012 progressed it seemed all this was having a lingering effect on our offerings, which were significantly below what was budgeted.

Many of the expenses for operating our church, such as the mortgage, salaries, and benefits, are fixed and cannot easily be reduced. However, we were able to cut back on other expenses so that overall expenditures in 2012 were approximately 6% less than what was budgeted. This helped somewhat to offset the decrease in offerings. Nevertheless, it appeared that we would end 2012 with a deficit.

At the congregation's Quarterly Business Meeting in November it was the consensus of the Voters Assembly that the Church Council should send out a letter to the members requesting a special Christmas offering to help with our budget shortfall. The goal was for Holy Cross to end 2012 "in the black."

As you can see from the figures below, we were blessed to achieve this significant goal! *Thank you* to all members of Holy Cross, both for your regular weekly giving throughout the year, and for whatever special offering you were able to make toward meeting this goal.

2012 Budget as of December 31

2012 Offerings Budgeted \$220,695
 2012 Offerings Received \$223,560
 2012 Budget Surplus \$2,865



2012 Poinsettia Donations

Thank you to all who donated poinsettias to beautify our church this Christmas, and to all who helped decorate. There were many comments from visitors on how exceptionally beautifully our church was decorated.

Given By

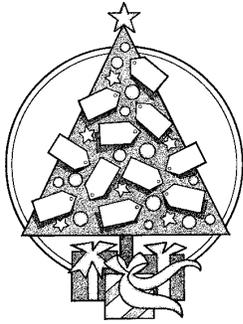
In Memory or Honor Of

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Darrel & Jackie Baker (3) | Family |
| Gary & Betty Gunderson (2) | Parents |
| Honner Family | Family |
| Roger & Peg Janke | Those Who Are Forever Present in Our Hearts |
| Doug & Sue Jansen (2) | Paul Jansen & Nancy Shortridge |
| Jensen Family (2) | Glory of God |
| Denny & Marlene Kuhn (2) | Family |
| Harold & Mary Mettenbrink (2) | Family |
| Todd Peters (3) | Rev. Carl & Dorcas Brueggemann
Mr. & Mrs. Walter P. Peters; Walter E. A. Peters |
| Ginny Petersen (4) | Husband, Bob; Nephew, Paul; Parents & In-Laws |
| Les & Dee Reifke | Family |
| Randy & Deb Stein | Betty Feller |
| Stoeger-Moore Family (2) | Family |
| Rev. Kevin & Terese Vogts (2) | Leroy Vogts & Grandparents |

Sanctuary Window Shades Donated

Thank you to Holy Cross Women in Mission for donating attractive new window shades for the side windows of the Sanctuary. Their donation was from funds received at their annual hog roast, and was approved by the Voters Assembly at the Quarterly Congregational Business Meeting in November.

There is a concept for these windows to eventually be fitted someday with stained glass. However, that could be many years or even decades, and until that time these shades will make sitting on the eastern half the Sanctuary much more comfortable. When stained glass is ultimately installed the design will take into consideration the angle of the sun striking these windows, incorporating opaque glass into the design so that the stained glass itself reduces the sunlight coming into the Sanctuary through these windows to a comfortable level.



Holy Cross Angel Tree

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously again this year to our Holy Cross Angel Tree for the Sioux City Gospel Mission. The several hundred items donated included Bibles, toys, DVD's, pajamas, shirts, jeans, underwear, socks and other items of clothing, as well as a huge quantity of toiletry items—one of their most pressing needs. We also gave the Gospel Mission the large number of food items from our Thanksgiving Food Drive (see picture page 6).

Thank you for helping provide a "Merry Christmas" for the homeless children, women, and men the Gospel Mission serves! *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people"* (Galatians 6:10).



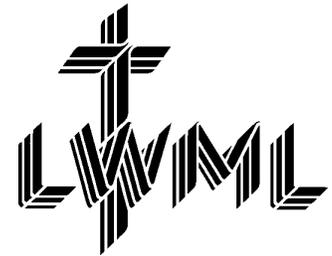
Voters Assembly January 20

The first Quarterly Congregational Business Meeting of the Holy Cross Voters Assembly for 2013 will be on Sunday, January 20. It is being held immediately following the worship service to encourage as many members as possible to stay and participate. There will be Sunday School but no Adult Bible Class that Sunday.



The children of Holy Cross Sunday School did a wonderful job sharing the Christmas story at their Christmas Program on December 16, closing the program by acting out the Nativity scene while the congregation sang "Silent Night."

All adult communicant members of Holy Cross are automatically voting members and everyone is urged to attend this meeting and help administer the business side of our congregation.



The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) at Holy Cross is under Holy Cross Lutheran Women In Mission. We wish to extend a warm welcome to all ladies who would be interested in being a part of this great mission organization! The January meeting is Wednesday, January 9 at 9:00am in the Gathering Room.



New Bible Class Begins January 13

Join in Adult Bible Class on Sundays at 10:30am in the Fellowship Hall for a new study beginning next Sunday, January 13 on *A Longer Look at the Lessons*. Each week we will delve into the Scripture readings from that Sunday's service.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).



Our Advent Suppers this year were again a big success! Each week the Fellowship Hall was crowded with

members and visitors enjoying the good food and fellowship.

Our thanks to the 5th & 6th and 7th & 8th grades and their parents and the Board of Elders for taking turns serving delicious suppers. Our thanks also to those who gave generously to the freewill offerings to help each group's special project.

We look forward to continuing this tradition with suppers before our Lenten services again this year too!



We welcome into membership at Holy Cross Lonny and Sallie Book, by transfer from Hope Lutheran Church, South Sioux City, Nebraska. They are at home at 459 Old Sawmill Road, South Sioux City, NE, 68776; 402-494-4315.

We are planning a New Member Sunday for these and other recent new members in February. *Welcome to the Holy Cross Family of Faith!*



Thank you to all members of Holy Cross for your lovely Christmas cards and very generous (and tasty!) gifts to our family throughout the holiday season.

Your kindness and thoughtfulness are truly appreciated.

*Pastor Kevin & Terese Vogts
Jacob, Sarah, Anna*



"Three Wise Women" entertained a large group of Holy Cross members and friends with a delightful skit at our annual Women's Christmas Dinner at Dakota Dunes Country Club on December 11. Can you figure out their real identities?



Altar Flowers 2013 Flower Calendar Available

The flower calendar for 2013 is now on the table in the Gathering Room. Occasions to remember include anniversaries, birthdays, in memory of loved ones, etc.

Flowers may be obtained anywhere and you may provide your own vase or use one of the assortment in the cabinet in the Vestry (small room east of Altar). They may be delivered during Office Hours, Tuesday thru Friday from 9:00am-11:00am, and placed in the flower cooler in the Sacristy (small room west of the Altar). Or, you can simply bring them early on Sunday morning.

Thank you to all those giving so many lovely flower arrangements throughout 2012!

December 2
Stoeger-Moore Family
Celebration of God's Blessings

December 16
Roger & Peg Janke
Birthdays & Anniversary

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Elders for January
Gary Amunson & Doug Jansen

Ushers for January
Ryan Dial & Bear Jensen

Chancel Care for January
Dee Reifke

Acolytes for January
January 6 Anna Vogts
January 13 Brady Schroeder
January 20 Hayden Jensen
January 27 Caden Peters

Crucifers for January
January 6 Anna Vogts
January 13 Bryce Schroeder
January 20 Henry Jensen
January 27 Kaleb Martin



Missionaries of the Month

Each month we remember in prayer in our worship services specific Missionaries of the Month around the world who we are helping support by our congregation's gift to the LCMS of 10% of our general offerings.

January 6

*Michelle Cagnin
Philippines*

January 13

*Rev. Frederick Reinhardt
Kenya*

January 20

*Katie Ziegler
Dominican Republic*

January 27

*Allan and Sandy Schmidt
Hong Kong*



The children of Holy Cross Preschool put on their headdresses to share Thanksgiving songs and pantomimes with the residents of Stoney Brook Assisted Living in Dakota Dunes.



For our Thanksgiving Food Drive this year the Board of Stewardship set up a beautiful harvest display in the Baptistry, to which members added their donations throughout November. Thank you to all those who donated so many food items for the Gospel Mission and to those who helped create this lovely display.



A newer member of Holy Cross recently commented how nice it is that many members stay for fellowship time after worship each week, something he's not experienced in previous congregations.

In the Gathering Room is a sign-up sheet to bring snacks in 2013. Most of January is still open and we need volunteers! Those serving snacks are also asked to prepare the coffee and juice, which along with cups, napkins, plates, etc. are available in the Coffee Bar. Thank you for helping with this fellowship activity.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

We list members' birthdays and anniversaries in the newsletter each month and the bulletin each week. However, our records are not complete. If your information is missing or inaccurate, please accept our apologies and notify the church office at 232-9117 or email holycross@longlines.com.

Janet Gustman, January 3
Greg Huibregtse, January 4
Terri Hageman, January 10
Denise Honner, January 10
Denny Kuhn, January 11
Rev. Charles Horkey, January 16
Vickie Britson, January 18
Janet Martin, January 20
Darrel Baker, January 22

Erin Fletcher, January 24
Kash Allyn DeRocher, January 31

Joe & Elaine Van Ackeren
January 25, 1969



Eloise Fischer

Mother of Jackie Baker

Entered Eternal Rest
January 4, 2013

*"Come unto Me, all you who
are weary and heavy laden,
and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28*



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2013



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<p>Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. <i>(Collect for New Year's Eve)</i></p>		<p>1</p> <p><i>Happy New Year!</i></p> <p>The Circumcision of Our Lord</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Wilhelm Loehle Theologian Died 1872</p>	<p>3 4 5</p> <p><u>Preschool Schedule</u> Monday, Wednesday, Friday Mornings Chapel Wednesdays 9:00am</p> <p><u>After School Care</u> Monday-Friday, 3:15pm-6:00pm</p> <p><i>Both Follow Dakota Valley Calendar</i></p>			
<p>6 The Epiphany of Our Lord</p> <p>9:15am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Sunday School 10:30am "Undeck the Halls!"</p> 	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:30pm Board of Elders</p>	<p>9</p> <p>10:00am Coffee at Hy-Vee on Hamilton 9:00am Women in Mission 6:30pm Midweek School 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>Teri Hageman Denise Honner</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Dennis Kuhn</p>	<p>12</p>	
<p>13 1st Sunday after the Epiphany</p> <p>8:45am Choir Warmup 9:15am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Sunday School & Bible Class</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>  <p>Newsletter Deadline</p>	<p>16</p> <p>10:00am Coffee at Hy-Vee on Hamilton 6:30pm Midweek School 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal</p>  <p>Rev. Charles Horkey</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>The Confession of St. Peter Vickie Britson</p>	<p>19</p>	
<p>20 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany</p> <p>9:15am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Sunday School 10:30am Voters Assembly Annual Meeting</p>  <p>Janet Martin</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Darrel Baker</p>	<p>23</p> <p>10:00am Coffee at Hy-Vee on Hamilton 6:30pm Midweek School 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal</p> 	<p>24</p>  <p>St. Timothy Erin Fletcher</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>The Conversion of St. Paul Joe & Elaine Van Ackeren</p>	<p>26</p>  <p>St. Titus</p>	
<p>27 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany</p> <p>8:45am Choir Warmup 9:15am Worship with Holy Communion 10:30am Sunday School & Bible Class</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>10:00am Coffee at Hy-Vee on Hamilton 6:30pm Midweek School 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal</p>  <p>Kash DeRocher</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>Church Office Hours Tuesday-Friday 9:00am-11:00am</p>			

Deadline for Calendar Submissions or Changes is the 15th of the Prior Month – Email to holycross@longlines.com or Leave Voicemail Message at Church Office – This Calendar May Not Reflect Late Submissions or Changes

