



Glad Tidings

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Sun Prairie, Wisconsin December 2006

Mid-week Advent Services

Wednesdays,
December 6, 13, 20
at 7:00 p.m.



The Saints of Advent

December 6 - St. Nicholas

Scripture reference-Galatians 2:20. The love of Christ was working through St. Nicholas in his life of giving; how is Christ working through you in your "gifting?"

December 13 - St. Lucia

Scripture reference-Revelation 7:14-17. St. Lucia was martyred for her faith in Christ and reminds us that Jesus, the bread of life, is the light of the world. You are also upheld by the ONE who was martyred for you!

December 20 - The Eve of St. Thomas, Apostle

Scripture reference-John 11:1-16; 14:1-7. What if Jesus had a twin? The name "twin" is a fitting description of all who would be disciples of Jesus. What does it mean to be Christ's twin?

Advent Dinners

A light supper will precede each of the three Advent services beginning on Wednesday, December 6 at 5:45 p.m.

Voters Meeting

Please join us for the Voter's Meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 6:15 p.m. **during our Advent dinner and before Advent Worship**, to approve our 2007 budget. Copies of the proposed budget are on the counter in the hallway.



Drop 'n' Shop

Soul+Fire Youth Ministry is offering "Drop N' Shop" again this year for parents who would like to go Christmas shopping without their kids.

On Saturday, December 16 from 10:30am - 2:00pm you can drop your kids off at church and go shopping. This is also the day of the Bethlehem Family Christmas Celebration. Those dropping their children off for practice at 9:00am can take this opportunity to leave your children until 2:00pm.

The youth group will have Christmas crafts, activities, a movie and lunch for the kids.

Please sign your children up today at the Purpose Place. A free will offering can be given to support next summer's Inner-city Chicago Mission Trip or Challenge Retreat.



Don't Settle for the Wrappings!

The Family Christmas Celebration will happen on Saturday, December 16 with the children's Christmas program at 5:00 p.m. followed by a potluck supper. Come and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas with other families at Bethlehem.

The Cookie Walk is December 10!

It's an annual fund-raising event of our Ladies' Guild. This year they're raising money for Sunshine Place in Sun Prairie and other mission projects. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans matches up to \$800.

We Need YOUR Help!



We ask each family to donate 5 dozen small, homemade Christmas cookies or candies to be brought to church on Friday, December 8 between 8-4:00, Saturday December 9 between 10-11:30 a.m., or Sunday, December 10 before early service. On Sunday, December 10 at 9:00 three sizes of containers will be for sale at \$5, \$8 & \$10 which you can then fill with your own choice of a huge variety of cookies and candies.





When visiting an elderly member during the Advent season of my first congregation over 23 years ago, I noticed that she had absolutely no decorations on or in her house. Not a wreath, not a tree - nothing. I discovered that her husband had died on Christmas Day. Christmas Day brought painful memories for her and she would not put up any decorations even though she faithfully celebrated Christmas in her heart.

It would probably seem odd to most of us to see a home devoid of decorations during this time to year. When you consider that Jesus will be born specifically to destroy death and sin it would be hard not to express joy. This is what redemption is all about-that God would become flesh for us and suffer for us and die for us and rise again for us. One of the hymns sung during Christmas is "Joy to the World" by Isaac Watts (tune by George Friederic Handel). My favorite of is verse three:

*No more let sins and sorrows
grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make
His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found.*

The joy comes in the fact that Christ's victory over the "curse" will not be partial. Death will not just limp away wounded. It will be annihilated, utterly destroyed: "[God] will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will

remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth." (Isaiah. 25:7-8) The hymn "Joy to the World" is theologically on target - God will lift the curse of sin and death not only morally (see Rom. 5:16-19 and 1 Cor. 15:55-57) and psychologically (in terms of sorrows - read Rev. 22:1-5), but also physically (in terms of thorns in the ground - read Rom. 8:18-24).

How far does Christ's redemptive work extend? **Far as the curse is found.** If redemption failed to reach the farthest boundaries of the curse, it would be incomplete. The God who rules the world with truth and grace won't be satisfied until every sin, sorrow, every thorn is reckoned with.

I'm grateful to the editors of the new Lutheran Service Book that the Scripture references have returned at the bottom of the page for each hymn! Psalm 98 expresses this "joy" to the world in verse 4:



May our Lord truly bless your time of "Joy" in Him!

In service to the KING of kings,
Pastor Mueller

"For I resolved to know nothing while with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2)



What does JESUS Want for Christmas?

Have you ever considered how backwards Christmas is? What if I invited you all to a birthday party for Joshua, and instead of giving gifts to him, you all came and gave gifts to each other? There would be one disappointed 4-year-old. Whose birthday is it that we celebrate at Christmas, anyway? It is JESUS' birthday, and if we are truly celebrating HIS birthday, shouldn't we take a look at what HE wants for Christmas?

One of the biggest things on His list is DISCIPLES. The last words of Jesus before He left the earth tell us what He wanted:

Matt. 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

When Jesus walked the Earth, He was looking for disciples, and I believe He still wants people to choose to be his disciples today. You and I face many choices along the way that determine whether we are Jesus' disciples - those who are willing to lose their life for Him - or whether we are simply part of the crowd of people following Jesus for what He can do for them.

Peter was a disciple. He left everything to follow Christ. But he was also a man - who failed Jesus by denying he even knew him on the night of Jesus' arrest. A few days later, Peter is with some of the other disciples, and tells them "I'm going fishing". So they go out together but don't catch anything. Jesus calls to them from the shore and later comes up to Simon Peter, motions to the fish, the nets, and the boat, and asks him quite simply, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" John 21:15

Can you imagine being asked that question by our Savior. He

may motion to your family members. He may motion to your career, or your position. He may motion to your possessions or your money. He may even ask you about your dreams and hopes for your life?

Do you love Him more than these?

What Jesus wants for Christmas, is for you to respond to him, "Yes Lord, I do love you more than these. And I am willing to prove it with my actions. Even if it costs me, I will follow you. For I am your disciple."

Merry Christmas from the Imlah's – Pete, Nikki, Abbi, Bethany & Joshua

A Fresh Start in 2007

The New Year will soon be upon us – a time to reflect upon the past year and resolve to improve ourselves in 2007. Do I lose weight, strive to make more money, take that cruise, or buy that new boat? But what about strengthening your walk with Jesus Christ?



Between work, paying the bills, and family responsibilities life can get pretty stress-ful. It's easy to forget that we are invited by Jesus in Matthew 11:28:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Consider 2007 **A Fresh Start** – where our focus is on Christ and not on the burdens of this world. Today is a glorious opportunity to serve your Father in heaven. Seize that opportunity while you can; tomorrow may indeed be too late.

Starting January 7th, Bethlehem will begin a new sermon series entitled: **A Fresh Start**. It will be conducted much

like our recent **Made to Count** series, with multiple small discussion groups during the week.

A Fresh Start is a journey of spiritual discovery. It's designed to help the people of Bethlehem Lutheran Church listen afresh to God and clarify our ministries as individuals and as a church. The themes include:

- **Abiding with God in 2007**
- **Where Have I Been?**
- **Where Am I Going?**
- **What is God Calling Me to Accomplish?**
- **My Grace Story**
- **Obedience**
- **Spiritual Battle**
- **Interdependence**
- **Finishing Well**

Each day offers countless opportunities to serve God, to seek His will, and to obey His teachings. But each day also offers countless opportunities to stray from God's commandments and to wander far from His path.

Sometimes, we wander aimlessly in a wilderness of our own making, but God has better plans for us. And, whenever we ask Him to renew our strength and guide our steps, He does. (Isaiah 40:30-31)

Somewhere between your day planner and your list of unfinished projects lies the reality of daily life. Ask God to renew your sense of purpose as He guides your steps.

Prayerfully consider joining Pastor Mueller, Pete Imlah and our church leaders as, together, we discover afresh the unique call of God in our lives.

Peter R Imlah

Youth & Family Minister

Equipping, Encouraging & Empowering the Body of Christ.

Soul+Fire

High School Youth Ministry

December Events

- 2 Church Christmas Decorating
- 3 Peder Eide Concert - meet 2:00pm at church cost is \$8

- 10 Youth Room – Bible Study
- 16 Drop N' Shop
- 17 Christmas Party

Cross+raining

Middle School Youth Ministry

December Events

- 2 Church Christmas Decorating
- 3 Peder Eide Concert - meet 2:00pm at church cost is \$8
- 6 The Fifth Commandment
- 13 The Sixth Commandment
- 16 Drop N' Shop
- 20 The Seventh Commandment & Christmas Party
- 27 OFF

Our Children in Church



Every now and then it is important to review our responsibilities to one another in the worship service. With these few lines please consider our children attending worship. **We want the children in worship as much as we want their parents in worship. Worship is the single most important thing we do together as the family of God.** But worship does not come to us naturally. So, as with anything we want to do well, we must learn it, practice it, work at it and in the doing together, we teach each other.

The question then is, "What are we teaching our children when we allow them to make repeated loud noises and to come and go from the family worship experience?" We are telling them "Others' worship experiences are not important... It is not important for you to be here... God doesn't expect you to praise Him... Your voice, your prayers, the offering of yourself doesn't count for much." Of

course none of these things are true. Jesus said, **“Permit the little children to come to me...”** and He blessed them. Solomon wrote we should **“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”** Indeed, learning the Christian life starts very young and how to worship God is a large part of it.

A couple of things that will help:

1. Help your child to follow along with the order of worship.
2. Sit up front. Your children will be able to see what’s going on. When up front, they will be less distracted by things going on in the congregation. If you have to take them out, the congregation will understand.
3. Keep your child with you in worship. They will never learn to sit still, speak quietly, follow along and participate, if they are continually off to the bathroom, out for a drink or off to play with the stuff in the nursery. It is excellent discipline to teach your child to get a drink and go to the restroom before worship begins. They should know that you expect them to stay with them throughout the service.

What a great joy we have been given by our God – to teach even the youngest among us how to praise Him for His most excellent love for us. And to begin preparing them for receiving the awesome gift of His Son’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. **It begins very young. It takes a consistent stand. It begins right now. God bless you in this great work.**



Stewardship Corner

Hello Fellow Stewards,

Our hope is that November made you think about the area of giving back to God what ever He has blessed you with. Our guest pastor Paul Spira did a terrific job of expanding our wisdom on the “T”s of Time, Talents and Treasures by giving us the insight to the “I”s of Increase, Intent, Immediacy, and Inspire, yet again making us aware of God’s instructions to give, with His desire for us to reap.

I hope you all take the message to heart and find out where to give your time, ask how to share your talents, and experience what a tithe of treasure can mean in your personal accounts.

We are here to serve God by helping you. We’ll find a fit for your time and we can make arrangements for your donations to be automatically with-drawn. We’ll enjoy fellowship with you at the voter’s meeting on December 6. It’s time to jump in and get connected.



December also makes us aware that the end of the year is at hand. For some

this may mean extra donations to offer thanksgiving. For others it may mean extra donations to get better tax benefits. Still others may just be aware of winter demands on churches and give extra.

One of the ways you might choose is towards our mortgage debt reduction. Watch for an explanation of what we can accomplish with lowering our mortgage. Then figure out the amount you decide to give on “DEBT RETIREMENT SUNDAY”. Envelopes are in the pews and the first week in

January we will see what a whole church can accomplish together.

See You In Church

Anne Meyer

2007 Offering

Envelopes



Your offering envelopes for next year have been renumbered so the numbers follow the alphabet. Please don’t use 2006 envelopes after December 31. 2007 envelope boxes are in alphabetical order on the table in the hallway. For those of you using Electronic Funds Transfer, the accounting company will be notified of your envelope number change.



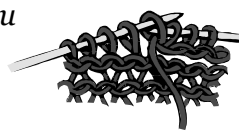
Our beautiful 800 recipe cookbook makes a wonderful Christmas birthday, or wedding shower gift. Cost is \$18 each for 1-2 copies or \$15 each for 3 or more copies. See a member of the Women’s Guild or Betty in the office to purchase. Cash & Carry only. Make checks out to “Bethlehem Women’s Guild.” Funds raised are used for mission projects here and abroad.

Our Ministries of Caring

Stephen Ministry

St. Matthew said that at the last judgment Jesus will say these words:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you



looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."
(Matthew 25:35-36)

One of the ways our congregation cares for others is through our trained Stephen Ministers, who go to those in need and care for them. Share in this ministry by praying for our Stephen Ministers and for their care receivers.

Care Team Ministry

A Care Team member puts their "faith into action."

A Care Team member responds to a neighbor's need.

A Care Team member might:

Provide a ride to church, an appointment, shopping, etc.
Replace a light bulb.

Visit a neighbor who is homebound or hospitalized.
Prepare or deliver a meal after a hospital stay or during a crisis.

A Care Team member is NEVER asked to do something they are uncomfortable with.

A Care Team member will receive initial and on-going training.

A Care Team member will commit 1-2 hours of service and 1 hour to attend the Care Team meeting per month.

Is God calling you to be a part of our Care Team Ministry? To learn more contact Mim Semmann, Kristine Ellestad or Donna Gannon.

Bethlehem's Women in Mission

The next Women's Guild gathering is the annual Ladies' Christmas Party on Monday, Dec. 4 at 6:00 p.m. Watch for quilting dates in the new year.

Knit or Crochet Bandages

We have an ongoing project to knit or crochet simple cotton bandages for tropical skin ulcer patients (size 8 needles or H

hook). Pick up directions at the Women's Guild table by the mail slots. Finished bandages can be placed in the basket there.

Volunteer Opportunities at Oakwood Village East

Contact Kim Viney, 230-4238 or kim.viney@oakwoodvillage.net to volunteer for any of the following or for more information.

Health Clinic Volunteer Asst. 1-2 Volunteers are needed to help providers for bladder health clinic in Community Center once a week on Wednesdays from 9-3 with copying, faxing, greeting residents, verifying appointments and other simple clerical tasks as needed.

Village Mercantile – Volunteers needed weekdays and Saturdays once a month for the gift and grocery store, M-F 12:30-3:15 p.m. or Sat. 12:45 – 3:15 p.m. Training provided.

Volunteer Drivers needed to take Apartment or assisted living residents to weekday medical appointments or on personal errands, M-F, a few times a month. Volunteer needs to use own vehicle, monthly mileage reimbursement provided.

Pet Visitors Volunteers with appropriate, sociable pets to come in a visit with Seasons assisted living and Meadows and Knoll memory care residents once a week, any day of the week, mornings, afternoons or early evenings.

One-Time Musical Entertainers

Individuals or groups welcome to volunteer by providing musical entertainment or performances for assisted living and memory care residents during the year. May be solo or group vocal or instrumental performances. Jazz, gospel, old-time, classical, or big band music most appropriate.



Sing-A-Long Messiah

The Sun Prairie United Methodist church is calling all singers to participate in the Sing-a-Long Messiah on Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 p.m. at the Sun Prairie United Methodist Church, 702 North St. in Sun Prairie. The performance will feature the choir made up of singers from throughout the community, wonderful soloists and an orchestra featuring many of the area's best performers. All people who attend will be able to sing! Tickets are \$10/person. Doors open at 3:30. Singers are encouraged to bring their own scores of the Messiah (Bethlehem has several available to lend – see Jim or Betty Isaacson). Musical talent is not a prerequisite to participate.

*Merry
Christmas!*