

The Tidings



Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

December 2007

Let's go to Bethlehem...

...and see this thing that has happened,
which the Lord has told us about. Luke 2:15

Journey to Bethlehem
Visit the manger
Stay for the miracle



Fasten your seatbelts for the trip of a lifetime to the city of David.

Meet Abraham, Moses and King David. Learn why Bethlehem was chosen for Christ's birth.

Join Joseph and Mary on the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem as they prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Journey with the angels to the skies above Bethlehem.

Meet the humble shepherds who came from the hillside to the manger.

Be moved by the Holy Spirit to share the promise of Jesus with people everywhere.

Your ticket is ready.

Flight departs... Sunday, Dec. 16, 9:30 a.m.

Potluck Immediately Following Service –

Everyone is invited!

Please join us and bring a dish to share!

A-G: Meat Dish or Meat H-M: Hot Dish N-Z: Salad



Mid-week Advent Services

Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. on December 5, 12, & 19 preceded by supper at 5:45 p.m.

All-church Christmas Program

Sunday, December 16 at 9:30 a.m.
(only 1 service that morning)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Morning Worship 9:00 a.m.

The Cookie Walk is Almost Here

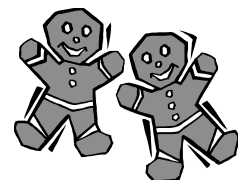
The annual Cookie Walk is Sunday, December 9. This is the annual Women's Guild fundraiser to raise money for mission projects each year. This year's proceeds will be used to ship our Global Care Packages as well as other mission endeavors. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans will match up to \$800 for this project.

We'll need your help!

Each Bethlehem family is asked to donate 5 dozen small, homemade Christmas cookies or candy. Bring them to the church kitchen on Friday, December 7 between 8-noon, Saturday December 8 between 9-11 a.m., or Sunday, December 9 before early service.

On Sunday, December 9 at 9:00 a.m. 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. These are great for your family, gifts, office parties, neighbors, etc.

Get your kids involved with this special mission project.



This Joyful Christmastide

*"And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."
(Luke 2:12)*

Christmas Eve was always a special time in my family. The children's Christmas program was usually on Christmas Eve and you always had a part to play. Whether it was Joseph, or Mary or one of the shepherds or a Wise Man - everyone took part. One year I even played a Roman soldier (!) I could never quite figure out what a Roman soldier was doing at the manger in Bethlehem. In retro-spect I realize that Jesus would indeed feel the spear of the Roman soldier on Good Friday. Pageantry surrounding the Nativity story is always one of joy, especially for children. When we went home after the program we knew that the gifts were waiting under our tree. Dad would have us sing several Christmas songs outside the door before we went in. If Dad didn't feel we had sung it just right, we were asked to sing again! What a great memory!

Martin Luther was aware of how important it was for children to understand the birth of the Savior. Luther wrote the Christmas hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" (LSB 358) in 1535 specifically for his children when they were just old enough to sing it. Some scholars maintain that the 15 - verse hymn is a miniature Christmas pageant for the family, with the angel singing stanzas 1-5, individual children stanzas 7-14, and stanzas 6 and 15 sung by the whole group. Luther followed his own axiom when he wrote this hymn: "If we wish to train children, we must become children with them." (Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 53 p. 291) The simple content of this hymn is patterned after a pre-Reformation secular folk song which was popular with the young people in Luther's time. It began with the lines:

Good news from far abroad I bring,
Glad tidings for you all I sing.
I bring so much you'd like to know
Much more than I shall tell you though.

After this verse the singer would propose a riddle to one of the girls, and unless she could solve it, she had to give him her wreath.

The hymn truly tells the whole story of our salvation in simple terms because we are spiritual children. Jesus said that unless we receive the Kingdom of God like a child we would never enter it. (Mark 10:15) All of us deal with sadness, misery and sorrow, and some struggle more during the holiday season. Luther wrote these

words of verse 8 in dealing with our greatest problem: sin.

Welcome thou art, thou noble guest,
With sinners who dost lie and rest,
And com'st into my misery!
How thankful I must ever be!

How truly blest are those who live the pageantry of the Nativity all year! May we sing from the heart the Good News of Jesus all year.

Dear little Jesus! in my shed,
Make thee a soft, white little bed,
And rest thee in my heart's low shrine,
That so my heart be always thine.

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who his own Son to us hath given!
For this the angel troop sings in
Such a new year with gladsome din.

**Christmas blessings to you
and yours!**

Pastor Mueller and Family

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

Darkness and Light

Much of the Christmas story is told in images of light and darkness, images so familiar that I gloss over them in my reading, looking for something else, for a big event. I take images of light for granted; but this year, for some reason, the images stand out for me: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2).

At a spiritual level, I know something of the darkness about which the scriptures speak. For me, it has to do with a sense of isolation, loneliness, far away from myself maybe, or from God, or from friends or family. I recently read an article on "desolation," chronic emotional pain. The article pointed out, that pain is not so much the problem; it's the accompanying isolation that we really cannot bear: "The human spirit can survive onslaughts of tragedy and suffering, but it cannot abide complete abandonment." As hard as it can be to celebrate some years. Christmas is very timely if it comes in the midst of a hard time: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those... a light has dawned."

If we know what a dark room looks like, we must also know the joy of a candle lit in that room. A small golden light dances on the walls and changes everything. Suddenly this is a place you want to be; this light is a



warm presence with you, even if nothing else about your situation has changed - same room; same furniture; same person sitting in it; same pain, fears and worries; even the same essential darkness surrounding you. But now there's a candle. This is entirely deferent. This has gone from being an experience of loneli-ness to one of solitude, maybe peace, maybe warmth.

We all find ourselves alone some of the time. We enter the world alone and leave it alone; this is the human condition. This is not to say what we don't need other people; we do, very much, and we get plenty of human companionship along life's way. But in our deepest inner lives, at our very cores, we find ourselves alone with God.

There are two ways we can turn with this aloneness: We can run from our aloneness, frightened and disturbed, thereby intensifying the loneliness. Or we can sit quietly in it, knowing that God is with us ... easier said than done. Neverthe-less, God's companionship in our solitude is much like the lit candle that changes everything about the room.

To me, Christmas is about that candle; Christmas says; It's not about the darkness anymore. Focus on the light. It's just a candle, just a bit of light, just a baby born. It doesn't take away our aloneness, yet it changes our entire experience here, our present and our future. In place of loneliness and anxiety, there is comfort and peace to be found in this room. May we focus on that candle this year, and rest and rejoice.

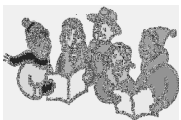
Merry Christmas!

Pete, Nikki, Abigail, Bethany & Joshua Imlah

Cross†raining/Confirmation

December

- 5 Eternal Life
- 12 Creed Review
- 19 Creed Final and Christmas Party



Middle School Christmas Caroling

Grades 6-8 Friday, December 14
Meet at church at 6:30 pm
Parent pick up at 9:00 pm
Drivers Needed

Soul†Fire High School Youth Ministry

December

- 2 Dinner and a Movie ("The Nativity Story") in the Youth Room at 6:00 pm

- 9 **Hot Coals for a Hot Head –**
Bible Study 6:00 pm
- 16 **Christmas Caroling and**
Christmas Party - meet at church at 5:30 pm



- ✿ Send Christmas cards that lift high the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem.
- ✿ When folks greet you with a "happy holidays" happily respond with, "Merry Christmas to you."
- ✿ When speaking to Christians, greet them with, "I hope you have a 'Mary' (not a Martha) Christmas." Then quickly explain what that means.
- ✿ Be sure you have personal daily Bible study. Make this a top priority!
- ✿ Be sure that you have daily devotions with your family or by yourself.
- ✿ Be sure that in these days you are worshiping Jesus. Really make the King of kings your King. Really work at it!
- ✿ Repeat the words of Luke 1:28 from Gabriel and Mary frequently throughout the day: "*I am highly favored*" and "*The Lord is with me*" and "*I am the Lord's servant.*"
- ✿ This month make it your prayer and goal to speak to at least one person who doesn't "know" Jesus so that they may really come to know Him. What a Christmas gift that would be!

New Study on Tuesday Mornings!

"Brave Enough to Follow"

What Jesus can do when you keep your eyes on Him.

**Tuesday's @ 6:00 am
at Beans 'N Cream
5550 Eastpark Blvd - Madison**

Simon Peter was an ordinary Galilean fisherman. Yet Jesus saw something in this bold tradesman. In Peter, Christ saw the opportunity to build His church. ***What does He see in You?***

The Master knew that Peter would do much more with his life than just catch dinner for his countrymen – he would courageously lead the church and its efforts to share the gospel across the globe. Looking closely at Peter's metamorphosis, this book and Bible study from

Stuart Bris-coe will encourage us to discover our specific place in the kingdom.

God can use our latent abilities to bring about His purposes in our families, small groups, businesses, and church – if we're brave enough to follow Him wherever He leads.

Peter R Imlah
Youth & Family Minister

Make a Blanket for Project Linus

Project Linus is a non-profit organization, dedicated to "Providing Security through Blankets," for ill or traumatized children and teens.

Blankets should be **home-made of all-new washable materials** (no recycled materials or wool) in child or teen-friendly colors or prints. They should be at least 30" x 36" for infants, 45" x 45" and 45" x 60" for older kids, up to a max of 45" x 72." Blankets may be knitted, crocheted, quilted or made of fleece. For fringed fleece blankets, it is best to start with a 1½ yd length of 60-inch wide fleece.

Place finished blankets in the blue box beneath the Ladies' Guild table in the hallway.

Welcome New Members

We recently welcomed the following people into membership at Bethlehem. Watch for their pictures on the easel by the Visitor Station and introduce yourself.

Kevin Crusan by Adult Confirmation. Kevin works for the City of Madison in the Division of Traffic Engineering and lives at 7839 Lynn St. in Morrisonville.

Kurt & Jill Dorfler and children **Kyle** and **Jenna** by transfer from Grace Lutheran Church in Menomonee Falls, WI. Kurt is an account manager for Pfizer, Jill is a homemaker, Kyle is a freshman at Sun Prairie High School and Jenna is in 6th grade at Patrick Marsh. They live at 138 Circle Dr. in Sun Prairie.

Mark & Julia James by Adult Confirmation and children **Erik** and **Danielle**. Mark is an optometrist at Shopko and Julia is a pharmacist at Target. They live at 1171 Atcheson, Sun Prairie.

Dan Knoch by transfer, his wife **Diane** by Adult Confirmation and their children **Dane** and **Chloe**. They live at 5 S. Bartelt Ct. in Madison.

Nick & Kate Simmons by Adult Confirmation and their son Jack. They live at 1499 Sunfield St. in Sun Prairie.

When I Report a Need for Care, How Can I Keep It Confidential?

Confidentiality is the foundation of Stephen Ministry. Care receivers do not need to worry that others will find out what they discuss with their Stephen Ministers. When you report a need, you are

the first important link in this process of confidentiality. You can help maintain confidentiality by:

- Never talking about a need unless you have permission from the person to mention it;
- Never asking a Stephen Minister about the caring relationship he or she is part of;
- Telling others about Stephen Ministry and then asking for permission to report their needs. Permission is absolutely necessary.

Confidentiality makes care possible. You can be part of it.



Journey through Grief

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. No two people grieve exactly alike. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Grief affects our ability to think, remember and concentrate. Grief from prior losses may resurface when someone we care about dies.

**YOU DO NOT HAVE TO
GRIEVE ALONE!**

St. Albert's Parish, in conjunction with HospiceCare Inc., is offering a *free* seven-week grief support group for those grieving the death of someone important in their lives. Attendance at all seven sessions is strongly encouraged.

Pre-registration is required.

What: Journey Through Grief
Support Group

When: Tuesday Nights January
15, 2008 – February 26

Time: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Place: St. Albert's Parish, lower
level of Albert House
2420 St. Albert Drive,
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Questions or to Register:

Please contact
Kris Simon, RN, BSN, MS
Grief Services Manager at HospiceCare Inc. at 276-4660.

Lutheran Women in Mission

February Young Women's Retreat in Madison

Women aged 12 years and better are invited to join Lutheran Women in Mission for the 2008 Young

Women's Retreat, put on by our young LWML women for all women. "Molded in the Potter's Hands" is the theme this year and features Jan Struck who will show us how to "Party at the Potter's House." Several people will share their experiences on recent mission trips throughout the world. Don't miss February 1-2, 2008 at the Crowne Plaza in Madison for an enjoyable experience and relaxing good time. Log on to www.swd-lwml.org for further information and registration forms or check the new issue of the *South Wisconsin News*.



Church Classifieds

The Bethlehem Classifieds Bulletin Board is available for member use in the fellowship hall.

Post an item for sale, give away or you are in need of, job opportunities, jobs needed etc. Just fill out one of the cards and post it for ONE MONTH. May be repeated as necessary. Pictures may also be included. Contact the church office at 837-7446 if you have any questions.

Thoughts on The Golden Compass: C.S. Lewis and His Anti-Self

(condensed from www.lcms.org)

by Dr. Joel D. Heck

If Lewis was able to steal past "those watchful dragons" through fantasy tales and convey much Christian theology, is it possible for the opposite to occur? Can one use the same style of imaginative writing to steal some anti-God ideology past watchful Christian dragons? Can an anti-Lewis do what Lewis did? Surely the answer is yes, which makes Philip Pullman Lewis's anti-self. And that is the major problem with *The Golden Compass*, both the book version and the upcoming film, the latter set for release Dec. 7th.

Philip Pullman, author of the book, is one of four authors whose fantasy writings are loved by many children and adults. Most readers know the names of the other three—C. S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and J.K. Rowling. Each of these three writers, however, claimed or claim Christianity as their creed. Pullman claims to be an atheist, or at least an agnostic. When Terry Brooks writes in his introduction to *The Golden Compass* of an epic fantasy story in the tradition of writers such as Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien, he is referring to their fairy-tale format, not their theological content. Pullman once wrote of Lewis's Narnia series, "I hate the Narnia books, and I hate them with deep and bitter passion." But what he hates the most about Narnia is Lewis's Christianity.

Pullman himself is said to have stated, "My books are about killing God," and that's what happens in the last book in the trilogy.

So what does one do? Boycott the movie? Because an old dictum says that any publicity, even negative publicity, is good publicity, what do we do? Ignore it and hope it goes away, even though the trilogy has sold more than 15 million copies worldwide? When the movie comes out on Dec. 7, I recommend that Christians respond in several ways.

First, in conversation, use the release of the movie as an opportunity for Christian witness. Many people will be unaware of anti-Christian sentiment in the movie.

Second, if you choose to attend the movie (many parents will decline), do so with eyes wide open, fully aware of Pullman's perspective.

Third, attending such a movie with advance preparation, discussion of the movie's good and bad points, and comparison of the movie with Walden Media's "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" can actually serve in some homes as a teaching opportunity during which a parent can contrast two worldviews. The problem with this, however, is the alleged removal, or toning down, of the subtle anti-church and anti-Christian phrases that appear occasionally in the book. (As I write this, I have not actually seen the movie, although I have tried to gain access to it.)

(Check out the many reviews of *The Golden Compass* movie that are available on the Internet to warn readers of the potential dangers.)



Bethlehem Lutheran Church
300 Broadway Drive
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
608-837-7446

Worship:
Sundays 8:00 & 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School 9:10 a.m.

Rev. Stephen M. Mueller, Pastor
Mr. Peter R. Imlah,
Youth & Family Minister

