

# The Tidings

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

January 2007

## A FRESH START



### Let It Begin At Bethlehem

How many of you would like to have a fresh start? Many of us have made multiple mistakes in our lives as Christians. We have experienced many setbacks and failures throughout the years. Sometimes we allow our mistakes, our setbacks and our failures to enslave us to the point that we never enjoy the full Christian life that God has given us.

In John 10:10 Jesus said, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* The devil will remind us of our past in order to keep us from enjoying the life that God gave us to live. The devil does not want you to have a fresh start in life.

Isn't it exciting to know that God desires to give you a fresh start? God said through His prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 43:18-19 *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!"* We need to understand that God is far more interested in our future than He is in our past. Some people think that God is stuck on their past. That all He wants to do is remind them of the things that they have done wrong. God is more interested in your future. That's where you're going to spend the rest of your life. God says that we are not to dwell on the past, but learn from

it and look toward the new things that He is going to do.

On **January 7** we begin a new series at Bethlehem: **A Fresh Start**. During this series each of us will have an opportunity to discover God's unique calling for our lives in a deeper and more personal way than ever before. This will be a discovery-based journey which will reinforce how God has been at work in our lives fulfilling His purposes and shaping our destiny.

Join us each Sunday morning as we worship God together and dig into His word for guidance and direction into living the life He desires for us. We will also have four different times to meet together for small group discussion.

**Sunday Mornings at 9:15,  
Monday evenings at 7:00,  
Tuesday mornings at 6 & 9.**

Please make it a priority in 2007 to join one of these studies to help you begin a fresh start.

### "How To Make a Fresh Start?"

#### S – Stop making excuses

If at first you don't succeed, welcome to the human race. Very few people make it on the first try. Oftentimes, we give up just when success is around the corner. You're never a failure until you give up. Sometimes we give up too soon. **Proverbs 28:13** *"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."*

#### T - Take an inventory of your life

We need to take an inventory of our life's experiences and learn from them. **Psalm 119:71** *"It is*

*good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes"*.

#### A - Act in faith

The Bible says that the key to changing anything is faith. If you want to change your circumstance, it takes faith. If you want to change your personality, it takes faith. If you want to change anything in your life, you have to have some faith.

**Matthew 17:20:** *He (Jesus) replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

#### R – Refocus

If we want a fresh start, we need to refocus the way that we think. **Romans 12:2** *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

#### T – Trust

Trust God to help us succeed. Depend on Him. We don't need to depend on ourselves. **Proverbs 3:5-6** *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."*

God's Richest Blessings in 2007! The Year of **A Fresh Start** at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

## Now That's Power!

As we begin a new year, many of us consider it a "fresh start." We all want it to be exciting, healthy and most importantly, led by our Lord. What is "exciting" about our church? What makes it dynamic? Do we say that the church thrives because dynamic people speak the Word? Or do we say the church thrives because people speak the dynamic Word? The Scriptures and the Lutheran church say the latter.

What happens if people like you and me are not particularly dynamic? Does God need dynamic people to spread His forgive-ness? Can He use ordinary, hapless, unimaginative, sinful people like me? Or must I be dynamic? Can He work through "clay vessels"?

The word *dynamic* comes from the Greek word *dynamis*, which is usually translated "power." The word is used in Scripture to describe God or miracles or acts of power whether done by our Lord, by His apostles or by those on whom the apostles had laid hands (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 29; 2 Cor. 12:12). An important use of the word *power* in the New Testament is when it is used to describe God's Word. Here are just a few examples:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the *power* of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Rom. 1:16

"And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of *power*, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the *power* of God." 1 Cor. 2:4-5

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My *power* is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the *power* of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Cor. 12:8-9

Notice that the GOSPEL is dynamic, not the one who speaks it. The WORD is dynamic, not the one to whom it is spoken. The MESSAGE is dynamic, not the congregation that authorizes its spread. If we were to describe those who shared the Word, we would call them anything but dynamic. They were weak, clay vessels and things that "are not." 1 Cor. 1:28



But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

2 Corinthians 4:7

The word *power* occurs 118 times in the New Testament. Never are the people of God called dynamic or powerful, except when they are weak. God never calls His church "successful." God's people are referred to as humble, lowly children who depend on the power of another. We depend on the power of the Gospel. The Gospel does not depend on our power. God demands us to trust the power of His Word alone. God expects us to affirm the Heidelberg theses Luther defended back in 1518.

18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.
20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

As we begin a new year, let us ask our Lord to keep us faithful to His Word and Sacraments. Shall we look for exciting, dynamic people or a dynamic Gospel? I, for one, will choose the dynamic Gospel!

In His service,  
Pastor Mueller

*"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* 1 Corinthians. 2:2

### **A Note on the Members of the Board of Lay Ministry Helping with Communion Distribution:**

It is the privilege of every member of the Board of Lay Ministry to be concerned about the spiritual well-being of our church members. Among the board's various duties are: to plan and publicize, regular and special services; to approve or disapprove new forms of worship, liturgies, and hymns for use in public worship; to provide for vicars, assistants, substitute pastors and guest speakers, as needed; and to ***assist the Pastor with communion distribution, reading of Scripture and preaching, as required...***

Under the authority and auspices of the Pastoral office, the Lay Ministers are authorized to help distribute Holy Communion which also includes the dismissal of those who have communed at the Lord's Table. As the Pastor and his assistants receive Holy Communion from the Lay Minister during the singing of the *Agnus Dei* (O Christ, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world...), they hear the words of the dismissal - "And now may the eating of Christ's true Body and the drinking of

His true Blood strengthen and keep you in the true faith unto life everlasting. Depart in His peace. Amen." Thanks be to God for these faithful men who are our Lay Ministers! Please pray for them as they have a very important task among our Body of Faith at Bethlehem Lutheran Church!

Pastor Mueller

## **A Fresh Start**

### **Bible Study Schedule**

**Sundays** 9:15-10:15 a.m. in Confirmation Room

**Mondays** 7:00-8:15 p. m. in Confirmation Room

**Tuesdays** 6:00-7:15 a.m. at Beans 'N Cream Coffee House

**Tuesdays** 9:00-10:15 a.m. in Confirmation Room – Staffed nursery available to parents with young children who would like to attend **this** session.

Each of the sites will have the same study so if you miss one you can come at a different time that week. Sign up today for the most convenient time for you. Don't miss out on this opportunity which will change your life!

### **Crosstraining**

Confirmation Class  
Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

### **January**

- 3 Commandments 7 & 8
- 10 Commandments 9 & 10
- 17 Conclusion of the Commandments
- 24 Commandment Exam
- 31 Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

### **Middle School Event**



Grades 6-8  
Sat., January 20  
Vitense Golfland

Indoor Mini-Golf Tournament.  
Meet at church at 4:00pm

### **SoulFire**

High School Youth Ministry

### **January**

- 7 Dinner & Devotions/Imlah's
- 14 In Youth Room
- 21 Vitense Indoor Mini-Golf Tournament
- 28 In Youth Room

### **High School & Middle School Event**

February 9-10

Ropes Reunion  
Weekend

Lock-In &  
Tubing





**Pot Luck  
& Square  
Dance**

**Sunday, January 21,  
1-4 p.m.  
at  
Mielcarek's Barn  
3139 Vinburn Road  
Sun Prairie**

### **Bethlehem's Women in Mission**

The next Women's Guild meeting is Monday, January 8 at

7:00 p.m. All confirmed women and girls are invited to attend.

### **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.

### **A "Sweet" Thank You!**

Many thanks to all who made and bought cookies for/at the **Cookie Walk** on December 10. \$867 was raised and \$800 more was matched by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans to bring the total to \$1667. \$800 will go to Sun Prairie's Sunshine Place and the rest was used by the Ladies' Guild for special projects.

### **Cookbooks Still Available**



Bethlehem's beautiful 800 recipe cookbook, "Feeding the Flock," makes a terrific kitchen resource or 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. Make checks out to "Bethlehem Women's Guild." Funds raised are used for mission projects here and abroad.

## EFT Your Offering

*Simply Giving* allows parishioners to have donations automatically withdrawn from their checking or savings account for church instead of writing a check each week (or bi-weekly, or monthly). Bethlehem is informed of each gift and it is recorded on your statement. It's easy to sign up. See Betty Isaacson for a form.

## 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.

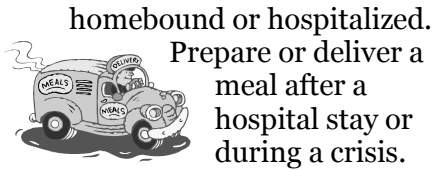
### Care Team Ministry

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.

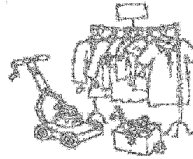
A Care Team member will commit 1-2 hours of service and 1 hour to attend the Care Team meeting per month.

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

## Volunteer Opportunities

### At the Bethesda Thrift Store

Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., runs resale stores with 100% of the profits going to their clients with developmental disabilities. They provide for the spiritual as well as the physical needs of their clients. They are in great need of volunteers in their new Madison store located at 201 Cottage Grove Rd.



To volunteer or to have an information packet sent to you, please call Sherry at 920-261-3050 ext. 3531 or 800-383-8743 ext. 3531. You can also contact the area District Director Jim Clary at ext. 4437 or call Alice Hanson, store manager at the store on Monday mornings – 608-223-1228.

### At Oakwood Village East

5565 Tancho Drive  
Madison, WI 53718

Contact Kim Viney, 230-4238 or [kim.viney@oakwoodvillage.net](mailto:kim.viney@oakwoodvillage.net) to volunteer for any of the following or for more information.

### Village Mercantile –

Volunteers needed weekdays and Saturdays once a month for the gift and grocery store, M-F 9:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. or 12:30-3:15 p.m. or Sat. 12:45 – 3:15 p.m. Training provided.



### Aviary Volunteer –

needed to help with light house-keeping for the caretaking of birds in the Community Center, Oakwood Seasons, Meadows and Knoll (4) aviaries once a week, most any day/morning or afternoon for about 1-2 hours.

### Parish Planning Council Minutes

November 14, 2006

Present: Tim Mielcarek, Pastor Mueller, Jim McCourt, Ron Knutson, Pat Schommer, Anne Meyer, Peter Bushman, Pete Imlah, Mike Grulke, Betty Isaacson

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m. by Executive Director Tim Mielcarek.

The minutes were approved as distributed.

Treasurer Pat Schommer announced that next year's budget appears to be about the same as this year's. The 2007 budget was discussed.

Pastor Mueller presented the basics of Synod's "Fan into Flame" capitol funding program. Information will be distributed at Bethlehem in the spring to give members an opportunity to participate. Pastor has the nomination

papers for synodical president and vice-president which are due back in March.

Pete Imlah noted that the “Made to Count” kick off was this week and nearly 80 participated. Pete is now working with the contemporary worship group and will be working with Evangelism starting January 7 on a 10-week series called “Fresh Beginning” with Refocus. The goal is 150 participants with the first summit on March 17. It will delve into who we are, where we’re going and how do we get there. The Family Christmas Celebration will be on Saturday, December 16 at 5:00 p.m. with potluck following the children’s program. No live nativity this year.

For the Board of Properties Ron Knutson reported that they will be building a new manger shelter for the lighted crèche in the front yard.

Jim McCourt reported for the Board of Lay Ministry that they recommend Pete’s deacon status be extended for one year through 2007 for both Mission Hill and Bethlehem. A motion was made, seconded and carried supporting this recommendation.

Anne Meyer for the Board of Stewardship announced that Debt Retirement Envelopes will be placed in each pew during December. January 7 will be a celebration Sunday for that collection.

Mike Grulke stated that the Board of Evangelism would like to send out special Christmas cards to delinquent members inviting them to the Christmas activities at church.

The Budget Voters Meeting will be held on December 6 at 6:00 during the supper preceding the Advent service.

There was some discussion regarding the use of the fellowship pad versus individual communion cards.

It was also noted that the Women’s Retreat on November 11 was very successful.

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Betty Isaacson

### **Voters Meeting Minutes**

*December 6, 2006*

Meeting called to order at 6:10PM by Executive Director Tim Mielcarek.

Pastor Mueller opened meeting with prayer.

List for reception of 18 new members and removal of 12 old members read by Jim McCourt, Lay Ministry Chair. Motion made to approve and seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve minutes of October voter’s meeting made and seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Pat Schommer, Treasurer, presented and discussed proposed budget for 2007. Motion made, seconded and unanimously passed to amend proposed budget as follows: increase our budgeted synod contribution amount to \$27,000—with \$3,000 targeted to Mission Hill in Waunakee—and increase our organ maintenance amount to \$300. Motion made and seconded to accept 2007 budget as amended. Passed unanimously.

Executive Director Tim Mielcarek introduced Steve Anacker as the new chair of the Evangelism board and Jim McCourt as the new chair of the Lay Ministry board. It was also announced that PPC unanimously voted, as did Lay Ministry, to apply to extend Pete Imlah’s deacon status through 2007. The district offices have subsequently approved this application and Pete will maintain his deacon status through 2007.

Motion made and seconded to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously. Closing prayer given by Pastor Mueller. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted By:  
Jim McCourt, Acting Secretary

### **Parish Planning Council**

*December 12, 2006*

Present: Tim Mielcarek, Pastor Mueller, Pete Imlah, Steve Anacker, Jim McCourt, Bob Hickey, Peter Bushman, Keith McCredie, Anne Meyer, Betty Isaacson

Executive Director Tim Mielcarek called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and Pastor Mueller opened with prayer.

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as distributed.

Pastor noted that he’s working with a district representative regarding the “Fan Into Flame” aspect of the ABLAZE program for Bethlehem.

Pete Imlah thanked those present for their involvement with the “Made to Count” study series. A new study, “A Fresh Start,” begins in January.

The Stewardship Board will be working on a church assimilation effort along with the other boards in January or February.

Keith McCredie commended the stable builders on a job well done. The board will meet 1/2 hour early on Jan. 2 to help "undecorate." The consensus of that board regarding communion registration is to keep the fellowship pads as they are and not go back to individual cards.

For the Board of Christian Education, Peter Bushman reminded everyone of the Family Christmas Celebration on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. with a potluck to follow.

Steve Anacker noted that the Board of Evangelism will be sending out Christmas Cards to selected members and will be updating their visitor follow-up process. They would prefer individual communion registration cards.

District Office will be questioned regarding Pete Imlah's deacon status as the papers only spoke of Mission Hill and not Bethlehem as well.

An announcement will be made soon during service about giving toward the sanctuary projection system and debt retirement.

There was discussion on ways to spiritually revitalize and invigorate the congregation. A group of council members will visit various other churches to get a feel for what attracts new members.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

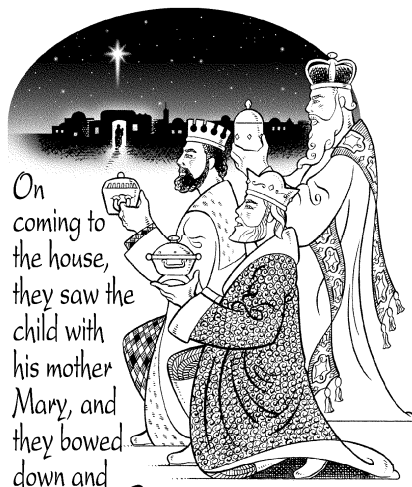
Respectfully submitted,  
Betty Isaacson

## The story behind Epiphany

Epiphany is the Christian festival celebrated each year on January 6. Along with Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, it is one of the oldest Christian holy days.

The festival was first celebrated in the Eastern Church (Orthodox) and was adopted in the Western church by the fourth century. Epiphany commemorates the first "showing forth" or manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles, particularly the Magi or Wise Men. The Epiphany story is meant to explain that Christ was not just for the Jews, but for non-Jews (Gentiles) as well, anywhere in the world.

The eve of Epiphany is called Twelfth Night and relates to the arrival of the Wise Men from the East at the birthplace of the Lord in Bethlehem.



On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and

*Worshiped*  
him.  
MATTHEW 2:11

## Bethlehem Lutheran Church

300 Broadway Drive  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590  
608.837.7446



### Worship:

Sundays 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School/Bible Class  
9:10

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

