

FAITH NEWSLETTER

December 2013 / January 2014

Dear Friends in Christ,

December 1st begins a new church year. Our church year starts in Advent, and this year Advent begins on December 1st.



The verse I'd like for us to focus on in the year ahead is Jesus' words in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new."

With our church's 75th anniversary approaching, our temptation will be to just focus on the old, to just look back to the past. I want to encourage us not only to look back, but to look forward to the new things that the Lord is doing in our congregation:

- **New Members** - at least four people are in the process of becoming members of faith and will be accepted into membership in December. Think of people who you know without a church home who could also be added to our number.
- **New Sunday School** - Beginning in January we will be starting up our Sunday School again. Please pray for our children and their teachers, and look for ways that you can help.
- **New Organ** - Our music program will be greatly enhanced when we receive this gift around Easter time next year.
- **New Access to the Church** - Our new railings will be installed in a few weeks, and we look forward to our new chair lifts as funds are available.
- **New Constitution** - The constitution committee has met, and they are working to update and improve our constitution so that our congregation runs smoothly and efficiently.

These are some of the exciting new things happening here at church, but they are small compared with the new things that Jesus does in your life. Jesus creates a new heart within you, giving you a new desire to love Him and serve your neighbors. What new things will the Lord guide you to do in the year ahead? Is it a new commitment to attend the Divine Service and receive His renewing Spirit? Is it a new start to your devotional life of reading God's Word and prayer? Is it a new involvement in showing mercy and compassion towards those in need?

Whatever new things lie in store for us as a congregation and for you personally in the coming year and beyond, it is all the work of Jesus Christ. He is the one who makes all things new.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Birkholz

In and Around Faith Church

Advent Open House

The Birkholz family would like to invite all members of Faith to an Advent **Open House** at the parsonage (9658 S. Melvina) on Sunday, December 8th from 3:00 - 5:00 PM. There is no need to bring anything, just come and enjoy the afternoon.

Children's Christmas Program

Once again the children from our Evenings with Jesus will be enacting the story of Christmas for us. They will be leading the first portion of our regular Sunday service on December 22nd and you are invited to a reception following the service hosted by the children and their parents.

Christmas Collection

The Faith Breakfast Ladies will be collecting winter hats, gloves, mittens and scarves for the needy. There will be a basket in the Narthex through Dec. 15th. Thank you for considering donating to this project.

Advent Midweek Services

This year's services will be on Wednesdays December 4th, 11th, and 18th. We will pray together Evening Prayer by candlelight as we look to our coming Lord for peace and comfort. Our services will focus on the psalms of Advent that point forward to the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Following the services there will be a time for refreshments and fellowship. If you would be willing to serve during one of these times, please sign up in the narthex.

Christmas Decorating

If you have a sense of style and like to decorate, please join us on Saturday, December 8th at 10:30 AM as we decorate the church for Christmas. A new Christmas tree has been generously donated for our sanctuary, and we will also set up the nativity scenes in the narthex. Come and help make our church beautiful for the holidays.

Christmas Caroling

On Saturday, December 14th we will be caroling at Smith Village in Beverly, where Helen Kutschke (Lois Werth's mother) resides. We will meet at church at noon to go over the music and then caravan to Smith Village where we will sing at 1:00 PM. All members and friends of the congregation are invited to participate.

Altar Guild Fundraiser

Once again the Altar Guild will have their Christmas tree set up in the narthex to help raise funds to cover expenses for the coming year. Please give generously as you are able. The Altar Guild is always looking for new members to help. If you are interested, please contact Diane Osmanski at 425-7192 or Debbi Hochgesang at 499-2866.

Poinsettias are available for purchase for \$11.50 each in red, white or pink. They will be placed in the chancel for our Christmas Services, and you are welcome to take them home after the Christmas Day service to enjoy throughout the Christmas season. Please sign up on the Altar Guild bulletin board in the narthex.

Advent Devotions

This year's Advent devotions are written by Pastor Birkholz based on the Bible Verses that make up the first part of Handel's Messiah. Each booklet includes a CD of the music, so you can listen along as you meditate upon and pray God's Word this Advent. These devotionals are available at church, or you may request a copy by contacting the church office.

Sunday School

After a break of several years, Faith's Sunday School will be restarted in 2014 with a special service on January 5th. To start, the Sunday School will meet on the first Sunday of each month at 10:15 AM. If you would like to help pass on the Faith and teach God's Word to the next generation, please speak with Pastor Birkholz.

Other News & Happenings

Ladies Aid

Faith Ladies Aid has again been blessed by having so many faithful workers who made our bazaar a success. We thank everyone for their hard work, donations, and their presence at the bazaar making it a special day. The profits help us to continue our mission work, as well as, the helping with projects around the church. We would like to thank the following: Chicago White Sox, Chicago Wolves, Moraine Valley Theater and those who donated to our raffle making it a huge success.

We invite all the ladies of Faith to our Christmas Party on Thursday, Dec. 5th in the Parish Hall. We will start our evening at 6:30 PM with a potluck dinner. The chicken will be provided but please bring a dish for everyone to share. If you plan on joining in on the grab bag please bring a wrapped \$5.00 gift. Please RSVP to Anna O'Neal.

May your Christmas be blessed with God's love and the New Year bring you happiness and love.

Kathleen Nowak

Faith Family Bingo Night

We will be hosting our second family bingo night on Jan. 25, 2014 at 5:00 PM.

We are asking for a donation of a non-perishable food item from all players on the night of the event. Donations of gift card or cash will also be accepted and appreciated. Gift cards from Dunkin Donuts, Jewel, and Mc Donald's are good but please no merchandise type prizes for this event.

There will be a concession stand with snacks, pizza, and burgers. Please come hungry and bring a friend. Proceeds from the concession stand will go toward Faith's special project fund.

Please contact Mike Kampenga at 708-595-4821 or Pastor Birkholz if you would like to support this event.

Food Pantry

Thank you to all our members for volunteering your time and effort in keeping the cupboards stocked. We can always use help with sorting and of course donations of food.

December needs: candied yams, cranberry sauce (jellied or whole), boxed instant potatoes.

January needs: All varieties of canned soup, crackers, and cereal.

If you can help in any way, please contact Bob Green Food Pantry Coordinator at 708-425-7570.

December Hymns of the Month

Advent: "Song of Hannah" (# 928)

During the season of Advent this year we will replace the psalm with a special canticle that is especially significant this time of year. Hannah was the mother of the prophet Samuel. After suffering with the shame of infertility, the Lord blessed her with a son, whom she then dedicated to the Lord's service. This is her song of praise, found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. If you listen closely, you will hear echoes of Hannah's song in Mary's song, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). This setting of Hannah's song was especially written for the LSB by Kurt von Kampen, who actually grew up in the same congregation in Michigan as Pastor Birkholz.

Christmas: "Where Shepherds Lately Knelt" (# 369)

Jaroslav Vajda is one the most prolific Lutheran hymn writers in recent years. Some of his better known compositions include "Go, My Children with My Blessing" and "Now the Silence." In this Christmas hymn he draws us into the story and shows in intimate terms what the birth of Jesus means for you. The tune was written by Carl Schalk, who served for many years at Concordia, River Forest. We will sing this hymn on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, December 29th and January 5th.

Special Project

On Sunday, November 10th, the voters approved the following priorities for future special improvements here at Faith:

- Replace and add outside railings - We will be improving the access to our facilities by adding and upgrading the cast iron railings from the street to the sidewalks.
- Replace existing chair lift - Our existing lift is aging, and is not the most safe or convenient for our members and guests to use. We will be replacing it with a much newer and more comfortable chair.
- Add chair lift to the basement - There is not any way for those with mobility concerns to get to the basement for Bible Study and for other fellowship events. We will be adding a chairlift that gives access to the basement, without obstructing the existing stairway.
- Basement Renovations - The current method of storing tables and chairs is difficult to use. The light fixtures are also aging and could be updated. We have discussed making improvements in these areas, but no specific plan has been adopted yet.

The total cost to complete these projects is approximately \$15,000. We are going to try to raise these funds before our 75th Anniversary celebration in April, 2015.

The Voters decided to borrow funds from our savings to begin work on the outside railings immediately, so that they can be installed before winter. Once these funds have been replaced, we will complete the other projects in the order listed above as donations are received to cover these costs.

If you would like to donate towards these improvements, you may use a special project envelope on the information table, or simply mark "special project" on your check. The church council will be meeting in December to discuss other fundraising options. Please continue to watch for other ways that you can help.

Installation of Officers & More

All congregational officers and those within other leadership positions in the congregation will be installed on Sunday, January 12th, during the 9:00 AM service. Following the service, there will be a congregational meeting, followed by a potluck luncheon. At the dinner we will welcome the following members who joined our congregation in the past year:

Dorothy Blume
Mary Gleason
Kim LaMantia
Karen Mirabile
Matt Piergies
Eric Rosenbrock

Scott Boye
John and Judy LaMantia
Linda Larson
Gary O'Neal
Lewis Radosevich

We will also be recognizing the following anniversaries of congregational membership that will occur in 2014:

60 years: Erma Johnson
50 years: Shirley Burkett
35 years: Jeff Vaughan
15 years: Dorothea Moeller

55 years: Howard Johnson
40 years: Rich Clark
25 years: Harry Kampenga

10 years: Mike & Sandy Kampenga, Jason Karaus, Christina Trojanowski, Glen & Lois Werth
5 years: A. J. Bray, Tim & Chris Radosevich, Jacob Rheinwald, Taylor Newton

House Blessings

The season of Epiphany is an appropriate time to have your house blessed, as we celebrate the visit of the Magi to worship Jesus at His home in Bethlehem. The rite of blessing is a service of prayer and the Word of God, so that our homes remain holy places where God continues to bless us each day.

Epiphany begins on January 6th and continues through March 4th. If you would like Pastor Birkholz to bless your home, please contact the church office.

Schedule of Dec. 2013 / Jan 2014 Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>December Event</u>
1	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
4	7:00 PM	Advent Worship
7	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
8	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
11	7:00 PM	Advent Worship
15	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
18	7:00 PM	Advent Worship
21	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
22	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Children's Reception
24	7:00 PM	Christmas Eve Worship / Communion
25	9:00 AM	Christmas Worship / Communion
29	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class

Weekly Meetings

Bible Study	Fri. - 11:00 AM
Confirmation Class	Thurs. - 3:30 PM
Evening w/Jesus	3 rd Thurs. - 6:00 PM
AA Groups	Mon. & Fri. - 6:00 PM
	Sat. - 8:00 AM
Adventure	1 st Sun. - 7:00 PM
ALANON	Tue. - 7:30 PM
Barnabas Christian Assembly	Sun. - 12:00 PM

Southwest Lutheran Chorus Concert

Faith will be hosting the Southwest Lutheran Chorus on Sunday, January 5 at 3:00 PM for a special concert of Advent and Christmas music. There is no cost, but a freewill offering will be received. We will be looking for volunteers to help usher and to serve refreshments following the concert.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>January Event</u>
4	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
5	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
12	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Congregation Meeting
	11:15 AM	Potluck Luncheon
18	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
19	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
26	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class

January Hymn of the Month

January 12-26: "O Morning Star How Fair and Bright" (# 395)

This hymn has been dubbed the "Queen of Chorales" and is a true treasure in our hymnal. It was composed by Philipp Nicolai, based on Psalm 45, with a few references to Revelation added. The reference to the "Morning Star" certainly fits with Epiphany's theme of light, but also with the end of the church year and our expectation of our Lord's return. Nicolai lived in the generation after Luther. He served in a difficult time both in the world and the church, but still composed many poems and hymns. Nicolai is also the author of "Wake, Awake for Night is Flying."

Wedding

Eric Rosenbrock and Mary Gleason will be united in holy matrimony here at Faith on Sunday, January 19th at 2:30 PM. The banns will be published at the 9:00 AM service on January 5th

Mary is in the process of joining our congregation, and Eric is reaffirming his membership as well. Please keep Eric and Mary in your prayers as this date approaches.

Epiphany Service

Our circuit Epiphany service is being hosted by St. Paul, Oak Lawn on Monday, January 6th at 7:00 PM. Watch for more information in the weeks to come.

Dec. / Jan. Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

December Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

Dec. 1	Alden Ketchum Ed Neaves Ray Bennett Howard Johnson
Dec. 8	Frank Oslakovic Richard Clark Katie Kampenga Mike Kampenga
Dec. 15	Ed Neaves Bob Green Nick Trojanowski Mark Trojanowski
Dec. 22	Alden Ketchum Gene Osmanski Mary Slepki Howard Johnson
Dec. 29	Frank Oslakovic Richard Clark Nick Trojanowski Mark Trojanowski

Advent Worship 7:00 PM Wednesday

Dec. 4	Frank Oslakovic Gene Osmanski
Dec. 11	Bob Green Alden Ketchum
Dec. 18	Ed Neaves Richard Clark

Christmas Eve Worship 7:00 PM

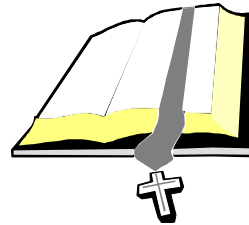
Dec. 24	Alden Ketchum Richard Clark Mark Trojanowski Nick Trojanowski
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Christmas Worship 9:00 AM

Dec. 25	Frank Oslakovic Gene Osmanski Ed Neaves Howard Johnson
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January Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

Jan. 5	Gene Osmanski Bob Green Howard Johnson Ray Bennett
Jan. 12	Alden Ketchum Frank Oslakovic Mark Trojanowski Nick Trojanowski
Jan. 19	Richard Clark Ed Neaves Katie Kampenga Mike Kampenga
Jan. 26	Gene Osmanski Bob Green Mary Slepki Howard Johnson



Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

Dec. 1	Ray Bennett
Dec. 8	Katie Kampenga
Dec. 15	Mark Trojanowski
Dec. 22	Debbie Hochgesang
Dec. 29	Ed Neaves
Jan. 5	Ray Bennett
Jan. 12	Nick Trojanowski
Jan. 19	Mike Kampenga
Jan. 26	Gene Osmanski