

FAITH NEWSLETTER

December 2006 / January 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



Once again, we are in that time of the year of anticipations and celebrations. The new church year begins with the season of Advent where we anticipate the first “coming” (advent) of the Son of God. The true joy and loving spirit of the Advent/Christmas season is solely because of the loving Gift God has given us in the true God/true man named Jesus (the Lord saves). The celebration of Christmas begins with the angel’s announcement that “...**there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord**” (Luke 2:11). This is most certainly a celebration of godly love that was poured out, and down, upon the earth at the first Christmas.



Indeed, the first Christmas celebration reminds us of the message from the multitude of angels when they rejoiced and praised God saying, “**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!**” (Luke 2:14). Being Christians, we have a greater peace than we could ever receive from the world. We have a peace that passes all understanding, reason, and logic! Celebrating the Lord’s birth at Christmas celebrates that we are loved and at peace with Almighty God.

It is truly God’s love for us in the Christ child that generates an outpouring of love from us. Our response to His love and our loving actions to others is “...**because He first loved us**” (1 John 4:19). Because of God’s gracious and wonderful love for us, we anticipate and celebrate. As the Christian Church, we joyfully anticipate and celebrate the birth of Immanuel (God with us), the incarnation of our God, and the hope of humankind that is heralded by angels. Therefore, enjoy the Christ of this season and of all seasons and remember, “**Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven**” (Matthew 10:32).

Not far behind Advent/Christmas is the anticipation and celebration of the New Year 2007. This new calendar year brings with it renewed hope for us that our lives will improve and be better than before. For those who have been confronting and dealing with health issues, there is renewed hope in 2007 for healing and comfort. For those who have been struggling and frustrated with relationships, there is renewed hope in 2007 for mutual love and understanding. For those who have been agonizing over financial pressures, there is renewed hope in 2007 for relief. Most importantly, for any or all of these situations, there is renewed hope because hope comes from God, who is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Because God loves you and me, we are to believe and trust in Him.

In the year 2007, we also want to remember and believe the directive Jesus gave us, when He said, “**You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him**” (Luke 12:40). We anticipate the second “coming” (advent) of the Son of God, returning the same way he departed many centuries ago. We are assured that Christ is coming again and “**coming soon**”! (cf. Rev. 22:7, 12). We wait in anticipation and ready for celebration!

Until then, we continue to look to the Lord for guidance and direction in another year of His grace. We look ahead and anticipate challenging stretches of our faith, and soul-searching and heartwarming sharing together of God’s Word, Jesus’ love, and the Spirit’s power. We are Christ’s Church and Christ’s Body. We are His instruments and vessels here on earth. “**I know my sheep,**” Jesus says, “**and they follow me. I give them eternal life...and no one can pluck them out of My hand**” (John 10:27,28).

A most blessed Christmas to each of you and a Happy New Year!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Steve Bocklage

In and Around Faith Church

LWML

I want to thank everyone that contributed to our door offering in October. \$165.00 was collected. At our convention in October, the delegates voted for twenty new projects to be funded from mite donations. Your donations will be a big help in doing these projects. The list of projects will be in the Northern Light Paper on the LWML page. All of these projects are designed to help people in need.

Grace Scott

Faith Ladies Aid

Faith Ladies Aid has been blessed by our faithful ladies and members who have helped make our Fall Bazaar a success. Many thanks to all for supporting our annual fund raiser and fellowship gathering, especially Founders Bank, The Cubs, and the Wolves. We made \$1,500 at this event.

Our December Christmas Tea has been cancelled. Instead we will have our usual Christmas Ladies Party in the Parish Hall on Thursday, Dec. 7th at 6:30 PM. Chicken will be provided. Please bring a dish for the common table. An optional \$5.00 wrapped grab bag gift can also be brought. For further information contact Gail Henson at 599-4990. For all you enthusiasts, we will be playing Bunco.

There is no meeting in January. Looking ahead, our February 1st meeting is our Valentine and membership meeting. Dues are only \$3.00. Please consider joining.

May you all have a blessed Christmas while remembering the lyrics:

“Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad New Year to all the earth.”

Kathleen Nowak
Membership Chairman

Faith Seniors

We are continuing to meet each month. In November we enjoyed a movie and in December we will meet at Georgeous Restaurant for a Christmas Lunch.

Grace Scott

Witnessing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Please show us who you would have as disciples. Grant us the words to say to invite them into community with us and with You.

Soften their hearts and open them up to the idea of learning more about You. Please teach us, train us and mold us so that we are approachable to those outside of our Christian fellowship.

Provide the answers for us when we are asked questions that we are not prepared for. Give us love, knowledge and understanding to act as Your witnesses.



In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

The Name of the Sender

The season of Advent opens by remembering Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The event proclaims the Advent message that Jesus is coming. He is the One who has come, still comes, and will come again.

Jesus comes with a remarkable mission. He has been sent by none other than God the Father, in fulfillment of His messianic promises. The people shouted, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Jesus' advents have to do with God's name, with God revealing Himself as the God who saves.

Jesus comes, God the Father is the sender. According to God's will, Jesus saves us from the punishment our sin deserves and from sin's power that enslaves us to evil.

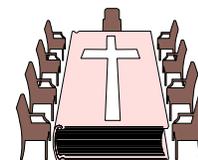
Schedule of December 2006 / January 2007 Events

Date	Time	December Event
2	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
3	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
6	7:00 PM	Advent Worship
10	9:00 AM	Worship / Children's Msg.
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
13	7:00 PM	Advent Worship
16	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
17	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
		Children's Program
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
24	9:00 AM	Worship
	7:00 PM	Christmas Eve Worship
25	9:00 AM	Christmas Worship / Communion
31	9:00 AM	Worship / Children's Msg.
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class

Date	Time	January Event
6	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
7	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
14	9:00 AM	Worship / Children's Msg.
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
20	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
21	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class
28	9:00 AM	Worship / Children's Msg.
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:15 AM	Adult Bible Class

Weekly Meetings

AA Groups	M & F - 6:00 PM
	Sat - 8:00 AM
Bible Study	Fri. - 10:30 AM
Girl Scouts	Tu - 6:00 PM F - 6:30 PM
ALANON	Tu - 7:00 PM
Choir	W - 6:30 PM
Seniors	(Third) - Th. - 12:00 PM
Ladies Aid	(First) - Th. - 7:00 PM



Prison Ministry by Karen Kogler

(from the Northern Illinois District's "Sparks" 10-18-06 Newsletter)

A ministry at Cross Lutheran, Yorkville, Illinois, is not necessarily restricted to men, but happens to involve only three men. Their task is not unusual--they lead two Bible studies on Sunday afternoon once a month. But their location *is* unusual--the Kendall County Jail.

"It's easy," Pete Heibel, one of the three volunteers, insists more than once during a conversation. "They want to come." Although some inmates come simply for the diversion or to talk to other people, most really want to be there. "They're longing to hear the Word."

As a county jail, inmates are serving generally shorter terms, many related to drugs and child support problems, but other people are in for felonies, including murder. Although some are overflow from Kane and Cook county jails, Pete sees mostly "a whole lot of local people" who did "stupid stuff". Some are "grateful to be in jail and are now "working to fix their lives."

Many who attend the Bible classes are Christians, Pete notes. "Some of these people are very strong believers, stronger than me."

Pete has been serving in this ministry two years. He describes the leader, Bob Trusheim, as a teacher who "always boils it down to Christ and the cross." Many others from Cross support the ministry. Sunday School offerings purchase Bibles, some in Spanish, for the inmates. Lutheran Women Missionary League members mark verses in each Bible, highlighting the salvation story. A prayer group prays over specific prayer requests from the inmates.

"I'm pretty nervous about it still," Pete confesses. "I'm not an outgoing type." But his voice conveys his compassion for the people who have made "stupid mistakes" and who are now living in jail. When someone brings up the difficulty of the ministry, he not only repeats, "It's easy," he simply and matter-of-factly states, "Jesus told us to do it."

Dec. / Jan. Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

- December 3** Frank Oslakovic
 Bill Weems
 Gail Henson
 Mary Slepiski
- December 10** Gene Osmanski
 Christina Trojanowski
 Elise Trojanowski
- December 17** Ed Neaves
 Alden Ketchum
 Al Skopec
 Andrea Skopec
- December 24** **9:00 AM**
 Richard Clark
 Glenn Werth
 Bob Stegman
- December 24** **7:00 PM**
 Bill Weems
 Richard Clark
 Colleen Weems
- December 25** **9:00 AM**
 Frank Oslakovic
 Gene Osmanski
 Mark Trojanowski
 Nick Trojanowski
- December 31** Frank Oslakovic
 Mark Trojanowski
 Dory Moeller

Advent Worship 7:00 PM Wednesday

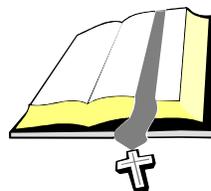
- December 6** Alden Ketchum
 Gene Osmanski
- December 13** Ed Neaves
 Frank Oslakovic

Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

- January 7** Bill Weems
 Gene Osmanski
 Colleen Weems
 Nick Trojanowski
- January 14** Ed Neaves
 Gail Henson
 Mary Slepiski
- January 21** Richard Clark
 Frank Oslakovic
 Christina Trojanowski
 Elise Trojanowski
- January 28** Alden Ketchum
 Al Skopec
 Andrea Skopec

Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

- December 3** Anna Bocklage
- December 10** Gene Osmanski
- December 17** Alma Rissky
- December 24** Ed Neaves
- December 31** Nick Trojanowski
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- January 7** Bill Weems
- January 14** Debbie Hochgesang
- January 21** Mark Trojanowski
- January 28** Alma Rissky



Pastor's Corner

"Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

Proverbs 30:8-9

More STEWARDSHIP Thoughts

God's stewards are managers, not owners. This means that God's stewards have been entrusted with life and life's resources and given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing them for Him. The challenge of this principle is not only to avoid the false notion that we are owners, but also to affirm and live out the truth that we are managers, or trustees, of that which belongs to God. We are to manage it all in ways that honor God, extend His kingdom and bless others.

The Free and Joyous Activity...

A definition that has been used in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) for a couple of decades defines Christian stewardship as "the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes." This is emphasized in Genesis 2: 15, in which Adam, before the fall into sin, was given the responsibility to work and care for God's garden. Work is a blessing although sin has made it oppressive and draining at times. That is part of what God meant when He said that Adam would earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow and would have to fight thorns and thistles in the process (Genesis 3:17-19). Also, Psalm 24:1 is one of those foundational verses in the Bible that clearly states that all things belong to God.

Important Points...

The words of 1 Timothy 6: 17-19 contain a number of important points:

- 1) we are rich, especially when we compare ourselves and our lifestyles with those who struggle to simply meet the basic needs of life;
- 2) we are to put our hope in God, not in uncertain wealth;
- 3) God provides us with so many things for our enjoyment;
- 4) we are under orders to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and willing to share;
- 5) by following God's expectations we will lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven and live the good life God has intended for us.

Implications...

There are implications that pertain to our Christian stewardship. One of them is that we may have trouble with giving because we have trouble with receiving. This may be especially true for people who tend to be self-reliant and not needing anything from anybody. Luther was wise in explaining that we are to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving (The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer). Also, it is so easy to think that we "own" things that we have purchased with "our" money that we "earned" with our hard work. All the things we enjoy are gifts from God. They are intended for us to enjoy and share, not to hoard and use only for ourselves. There is some of this good wisdom by Solomon in Proverbs 30:8-9.

Getting At The Heart Of Christian Stewardship...

Only when we recognize God as the true Owner and ourselves as stewards, trustees and managers can we live lives that are full and free from worry. It is not wrong to have things, even in abundance, but it is wrong to put our hope, trust and sense of worth in things! Remember, *maturing stewards do the right things for the right reasons and strive for excellence in all they do!*

The Ten Commandments:

In a simple way in which the head of a house is to present them to the household.

The First Commandment

You are to have no other gods.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.

The Second Commandment

You are not to misuse the name of your God.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God's name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.

The Third Commandment

You are to hallow the day of rest.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's Word, but instead keep that Word holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment

You are to honor your father and your mother.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority, but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them.

The Fifth Commandment

You are not to kill.

What is this? Answer:

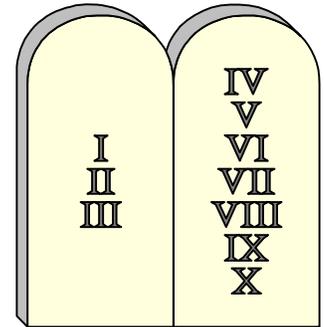
We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.

The Sixth Commandment

You are not to commit adultery.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.



The Seventh Commandment

You are not to steal.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbors' money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.

The Eighth Commandment

You are not to bear false witness against your neighbor.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

The Ninth Commandment

You are not to covet your neighbor's house.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.

The Tenth Commandment

You are not to covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, cattle, or whatever is his.

What is this? Answer:

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.

What then does God say about all these commandments? Answer:

God says the following: "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. Against those who hate me I visit the sin of the fathers on the children up to the third and fourth generation. But I do good to those who love me and keep my commandments to the thousandth generation."

What is this? Answer:

God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore we are to fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. However, God promises grace and every good thing to all those who keep these commandments. Therefore we also are to love and trust him and gladly act according to his commands.¹

¹Kolb, R. 2000. *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis

STEWARDSHIP WITHOUT FAITH IS AN ANOMALY

(from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's October 2006 STEWARDcast)

If by "anomaly" we mean to say something is abnormal, inconsistent or odd, then stewardship as understood by the ordinary person is an "anomaly." According to George Barna [a well-respected church analyst and researcher], "'stewardship' is unknown to most Americans and is a term seldom used. Likewise, 'holistic stewardship' is less known and is not understood in many religious circles. Mention the word 'stewardship' to most Americans and what comes to their minds? Frankly, nothing; it is not a word most people know or use. However, it has become a religious term used frequently by churches in relation to financial management."

Herein lies a problem with many churches today. By defining stewardship only in terms of financial management, many churches limit their view of ministry solely to what is allowed in the budget. Outreach then is limited by the budget and income. In some cases, adding more people to get more money to add more people drives not only stewardship, but also evangelism. As Barna suggests, "Highly effective churches use the term (stewardship) too, but they apply it in a more global manner. Stewardship is a big issue in these ministries, but it is used to address more than wise allocation of money."

"Holistic stewardship" is defined as "managing all of the resources entrusted to us by God." We know God is the Creator and Owner of everything. He entrusts us with the responsibility to **"have dominion over the earth" (Genesis 1:28)** and **"to work and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15)**. In the beginning people were content to let God be God. All this changed when people sought ownership of everything.

From the beginning, God set His parameters for personal and corporate stewardship. This was not limited to personal finances and corporate stewardship. In Genesis, stewardship began with a relationship with God and the values and assumptions resulting from this relationship. God expected His people to behave like His creation and gave them every reason to trust Him. Mankind valued this relationship and responded by following the Lord's directives. Accordingly, people behaved like people "made in the image of God." Stewardship takes its lead from this relational aura set by God. Again, Barna sets the tone for stewardship when he writes, "The underlying motivation is that stewardship is a behavior, but like any behaviors, it is driven by values and assumptions. In our personal lives, and especially in the corporate life of the church, what we do in the realm of stewardship will include strengthening a stewardship mind-set into various lessons taught within the church."

In short, the concept and practice of stewardship are not things we are born with; they are taught explicitly from God's Word and accepted by faith. When they become a part of our Christian walk, then we behave as "wise managers." [You can read more about this in George Barna's book, **The Habits of Highly Effective Churches**, Ventura, California: Issachar Resources, 1998].

GIVING ACCOUNT

"Each of us will give account of himself to God." Romans 14:12

All of us, whoever we are and whatever our station in life, will have to give an account of ourselves to God. That means that we will have to answer to God for our conduct as well as the use we have made of the time and the other things that He has given us.

This does not apply only to the rich or those who have received special talents. All of us have some possessions, gifts, and abilities that we can use in the service of God or our fellow human beings. How we do this is of concern to God. He requires us to give an account to Him of how we are using what we have.

Are we using those precious eyes, which He has given us to behold things that are good and beautiful, to read His holy Word? Are we using our ears to listen to Him and to respond to the cries of the needy? Are we using our mouths to witness to Christ, to speak words of kindness, to pray, and to praise? Are we using our hands to help and our feet to rescue the troubled? Are we sharing our blessings with the less fortunate? Are we following God's commandments?

PRAYER: Our loving Father, help us to remember that we must give account to You of how well we have done our duty in serving You. Grant us faithfulness always, using our gifts and talents to Your glory and to the welfare of our fellow human beings; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(from The Abundant Life: Daily Devotions Through The Year"- October 19, 2006)

CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS ARE THE KEY STEWARDS

By virtue of their positions in the system, congregational leaders are the key stewards of the congregation as a unit in itself. They are the ones who can most promote congregational health. More important than any of the conditions congregations face is the capacity of their leaders to make clear and effective responses to the conditions. On what specific items or forces, then, will they need to focus in order to impact the health of their respective congregations? What generally influences congregational health? Seven health promoters do—purpose, appraisal and management of conflict, clarity, mood and tone, mature interaction, healing capacities, and a focus on resources.

(from the Alban Weekly - week of 10/09/2006)

BUDGETS WITHOUT FAITH AND TRUST ARE VALUELESS

"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34). In this passage Luke takes up the issue of values. Jesus points out the futility of living with unwarranted fear and worry over what happens to our treasures. If we are "possessed by our possessions" then worry, fear, doubt and greed rush in to crowd out trust and confidence. Tomorrow will be fretful; today confusing. What does this do to wise, sound planning? Jesus' answer comes in **Luke 12:31, "But seek first His kingdom and these things will be given to you as well."**

Congregational budgeting reflects personal faith and trust in Christ. Ronald J. Chewning [of Stewardship Advisors, a producer of good Lutheran stewardship resources] concurs: "We can't separate our finances from our daily walk with Christ because financial decisions are spiritual decisions. When our finances are under control, our Christian ministry has a better chance to grow." If we apply this to congregational budgeting, the same holds true for a church. "Financial chaos and uncertainty cause anxiety and frustration that can lead to despair."

As we budget we must ask what we value most as we lay out a road map for the future. If our budgets are not a reflection of our trust in God, then we will face unbalanced and egocentric budgets rather than Christ-centered budgets.

(from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's October 2006 STEWARDcast)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Family Ministry October 2006 Newsletter

Worship is work. It's divine work. God begins it. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He offers to us by His mercy the fully completed rescue from our sin and its consequence, death. Jesus, the Son, perfectly polished off that release by His death and resurrection on our behalf. Now God's Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus through the dynamite power of the good news of Jesus' victory. Through this message God enables us to take hold of His gift of endless life in God's company. He also connects us through faith to His energy for a really good life here on earth.

This wholesome existence includes our work of worshipping God. He calls us, as individuals and as a family, to the daily tasks of praise and thanks to Him. He empowers us to expend effort in praying for a growing trust in His guidance, immersing ourselves in His Word of life, honoring Him with obedience to His will, committing ourselves to love and make sacrifices for Him and for our fellow human beings, starting with our own family members.

God's work continues. For the sake of His Son Jesus, He lovingly accepts and proclaims flawless our blemished efforts to study, pray and serve Him and those who live around us. He observes the worship we offer through faith in Christ. In His forgiveness He mercifully declares, "It is good." In His love He blesses the work of our worship.

This year, our church has provided a new tool for our family worship work. It's named **Lutheran Service Book** (LSB), prepared by the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

The compelling contents of this fresh publication will surely charm you into purchasing at least one copy for your family and private devotions. Each section contains rich treasures to be mined and celebrated.

Note the fascinating variety of instruments for instruction: confession, praise, petition, meditation, inspiration, memorization and springboards for action. Every reader will find excellent helps for a God pleasing worship life. You will also enjoy the fact that the parts of the book are consecutively numbered.

[Numbers 1 – 150](#) > One hundred and seven of the Psalms

[Numbers 151 – 320](#) > Service settings, daily prayers, confession and absolution, almost 100 printed prayers for different occasions, intercessions and thanksgiving

[Numbers 321-330](#) > The Small Catechism with Christian Questions and Answers to help prepare for Holy Communion

[Numbers 331 – 924](#) > For both reading and singing, for every season and circumstance, beautiful hymns, old favorites, new gems, count them!

[Numbers 925-966](#) > Biblical canticles, liturgical music, nation and national songs

Your pastor, organist, choir director, church library or book store will be pleased to let you examine a copy of Lutheran Service Book. You will get excited about how you can put it to work in your family and personal worship.