

# FAITH NEWSLETTER

December 2011 / January 2012

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Dear Friends in Christ,



With this newsletter, our look at the emphases of Witness, Mercy, and Life Together draws to a close. Jesus preserves His witness in the church, and then uses us as His witnesses. Jesus is merciful to you so that you will show mercy to others. And now we consider the life together that Jesus gives us within His church.

When Jesus makes you His own, He connects you to Himself, and He also connects you with the rest of the Church. You can't be a "lone ranger" Christian. You cannot live a Christian life without being part of a larger community. It's just not the way that Jesus does things.

Picture a wheel. All the spokes are connected to a central hub, but they are also connected to one another. You are a spoke, connected to Jesus Christ, the hub, but you are also connected to fellow Christians within the church.

Jesus Christ puts us together within the Church for our own good, so that we can support and care for each other. You may wake up one morning and think, "I'm doing fine. I don't need to be in church." You may be doing fine, but your fellow Christians often struggle. They may need your love and encouragement. Our life together is about sharing our pains and disappointments, and supporting each other in difficult times.

But just as we come together in times of suffering, we also come together in times of rejoicing. We celebrate together as we receive our Lord's blessings, and join with one another in giving thanks. Whether it's a baptism or wedding, birthday or anniversary we come together in these times of celebration to share in our joy.

Our life together is most visible on Sunday mornings, especially as we gather around the altar to eat and drink Jesus' body and blood. This sharing is called "communion" as we are all united by our common participation in the body of Christ. This communion flows from the altar to our time together as we share meals and socialize outside of the Divine Service.

The holidays can be a lonely time, especially for those who are not connected to Jesus Christ and His body, the Church. As you meet people who are isolated and alone, invite them to join us and share in our Lord's blessings, especially with our many holiday services coming up in the weeks ahead. The Lord has made you part of this fellowship, so that you will also draw other people into our life together.

As you prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth, remember the words of the angel, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for **all the people**. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

Merry Christmas,

Pastor Birkholz

# In and Around Faith Church

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## Ladies Aid

The weather might not have been perfect for the Ladies Bazaar, but inside much enthusiasm and hard work made for a wonderful gathering of Christian fellowship. Thanks to all who donated crafts, bakery, raffle items and time. Most of all, thanks to everyone who attended and supported this event. As usual the chili lunch and pork roast dinner was delicious.

Our Ladies Aid Christmas party will be held on Thursday Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 PM. Chicken will be provided and we ask you bring a potluck dish for the common table. If you wish to participate in the grab bag please bring a \$5.00 wrapped gift. Please contact Ann O'Neil if you plan on attending. All Ladies are invited. Remember we do not hold a meeting in January.

Blessings of Christmas and the New Year be with you and your families.

Kathleen Nowak

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## Constitution Committee

Faith's current constitution will be celebrating its 30th birthday this year, and is need of a few updates. If you are interested in taking a look at how our congregation is organized and have some ideas on how we can operate more efficiently, please contact Pastor Birkholz, Frank Oslakovic, or Gene Osmanski.

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## Lutheranism 101

Our Friday morning Bible Class continues to grow as we explore what we believe as Lutherans, and what this means for our life. Upcoming topics include Faith, the Church, the Pastoral Office, and the Role of Women in the church. It's not too late to join in. Please contact Pastor Birkholz for more information.

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## Children's Christmas Service

The children of the congregation will be enacting God's Word for you on Sunday, December 18. During our regular 9:00a service, they will lead our songs of praise, and then help us to see what God has done for us. Following the service will be a brief reception with the children and their families.

## New Members

The Piergies family has transferred their membership back to Faith from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Oak Lawn. Carol works at Advocate Christ Hospital, and her son, Nick, a recent graduate of Northern Illinois University, is employed by Menards. Her son Matt is a seventh grader who enjoys soccer and skateboarding. He is currently attending confirmation classes.

Piergies Family  
7642 West 93rd Street  
Bridgeview, IL 60455

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## Christmas Decorating

On Saturday, December 10, we'll be gathering at the church at 9:00a to get everything ready for Christmas. We'll give the church a thorough cleaning, and then set up the decorations for Christmas. Please stop by for a few hours, if you are able.

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## 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party

This December, Erma Johnson will be giving thanks to God for 90 years of life, and she would like her family of faith to help her celebrate. She will be hosting a special brunch in the church basement on Sunday, December 11 at 11:00a. Please come to join the celebration.

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## Have you been away from church?

If you've been absent due to work, illness, busyness, or for any other reason, now is the time to return. John the Baptist's words are for all of us, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." We know that just as Jesus came once at Bethlehem, He will come again to judge the living and the dead. Jesus prepares us for His return by forgiving our sins and strengthening our faith in the Divine Service. Be ready, because you do not know when He will return.

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## Childcare

We have begun to offer childcare following our Sunday services so that parents can attend Bible Class. Volunteers are being asked to commit to one Sunday per month. If you would like to help, please contact Pastor Birkholz.

# December Happenings

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## **Advent & Christmas Devotions:**

Pastor Birkholz has written a series of meditations on the hymns of Christmas entitled "Now Sing We, Now Rejoice." These brief meditations are designed to draw you and your family into prayer and conversation with your Lord this special time of year. Pick up your copy on the information table, or contact the church office to have one sent to you.

## **Advent Midweek Services:**

Our Advent services this year will focus on the hymns of Advent and Christmas. Members voted on their favorite hymns, and the top favorites will be the focus of each service. Services will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:00p, with a time for fellowship following. The groups listed below have been asked to provide refreshments.

November 30 – O Come, O Come Emmanuel (Birkholz Family)

December 7 – Silent Night, Holy Night (Elders)

December 14 – Joy to the World (Ladies Aid)

December 21 – What Child Is This (Youth & Young Adults)

Use this time to take a break from the busyness of the holiday season, and to rest in the arms of your Savior.

## **Private Confession and Absolution:**

Advent is a time to prepare for Christmas. As we look forward to our Savior's birth, we are reminded that He came because of our sinfulness. The best way to prepare for Christmas is to confess your sins and to hear God's word of forgiveness for you. Pastor Birkholz will be available to hear your confession and forgive your sins on God's behalf on Thursday, December 22 from 1:00p – 3:00p and on Friday, December 23 from 7:00p – 9:00p. If you would like to meet with him at another time, please call to make an appointment. For more information on Private Confession and Absolution, please see the handout on the information table.

# January Happenings

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## January 1

To most of the world, January 1 signals the beginning of a new calendar year. In the church, our year begins in Advent, but January 1 is still important. Luke tells us that Jesus was circumcised and given His name on His eighth day of life (Luke 2:21). Since we celebrate Christmas on December 25, this makes January 1 the Feast of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus. This year January 1 falls on a Sunday, which means that we get to celebrate this feast together at Faith. So before you turn to the parades and bowl games, come to church and celebrate Jesus and His Saving Name.

## Epiphany Service

Once again, Faith has been asked to host our joint circuit Epiphany service. The service will be at 7:00p on Thursday, January 5, with a potluck dinner at 5:45p and choir rehearsal at 6:30p. Volunteers will be need to help set-up, clean-up, and serve dinner. Last year we had 120 in attendance for this special festival service. Don't miss this opportunity to worship with your fellow Lutherans.

## Installation of Officers

On Sunday, January 15 we will be installing the new officers elected in our November Voters' meeting. We will also install the officers of the Ladies' Aid and the Altar Guild.

Following the service we will have a reception to:

- Hold our January Voters' Meeting.
- Welcome the Piergies family to our congregation.
- Thank the new officers who will serve our congregation in the coming year. Those elected to new offices include Ed Neaves (President); Bob Green (Vice-President & Elder); Joyce Stroh (Secretary), Laura Zilinsky (Assistant Financial Secretary); and Derrick Jimenez (Trustee).
- Thank the outgoing officers: Frank Oslakovic (President); Celeste Oslakovic (Secretary); Christina Trojanowski (Assistant Financial Secretary); and Ray Godbout (Trustee).
- Honor those who have significant anniversaries of communicant membership at Faith\*:
  - 60 years: Barbara Bohne, Dorothy Litke
  - 40 years: Bob Green
  - 35 years: Gwen Hresil
  - 30 years: James Henson
  - 25 years: Don & Kathleen Nowak, Lori Slepski
  - 10 years: Florence Bristow, Jessica Coffman, John & Lisa Goggin, Ed & Samantha Newton, Lisa Owen, Nick Trojanowski
  - 5 years: Wren Johnson, Lisa Karaus, Joyce Stroh

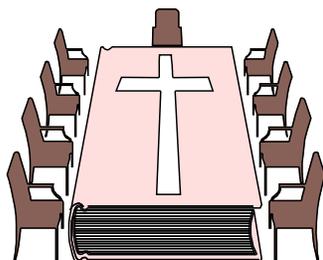
\*If you have any corrections or additions to this list, please contact the church office.

# Schedule of Dec.2011 / Jan. 2012 Events

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Dec. Event</u>                    |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3           | 9:00 AM     | Food Pantry Distribution             |
| 4           | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion                  |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class                    |
| 7           | 7:00 PM     | Advent Service                       |
| 11          | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion                  |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class                    |
| 14          | 7:00 PM     | Advent Service                       |
| 17          | 9:00 AM     | Food Pantry Distribution             |
| 18          | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion                  |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class                    |
| 21          | 7:00 PM     | Advent Service                       |
| 24          | 7:00 PM     | Christmas Eve<br>Worship / Communion |
| 25          | 9:00 AM     | Christmas Day<br>Worship / Communion |

## Weekly Meetings

|                                       |                                      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Bible Study</b>                    | <b>Fri. - 10:30 AM</b>               |
| <b>Evening w/Jesus 3<sup>rd</sup></b> | <b>Thurs. 6:00 PM</b>                |
| <b>Family Night 1<sup>st</sup></b>    | <b>Fri. - 6:00 PM</b>                |
| <b>AA Groups</b>                      | <b>M &amp; F - 6:00 PM</b>           |
|                                       | <b>Sat - 8:00 AM</b>                 |
| <b>Girl Scouts</b>                    | <b>Tu - 3:30 PM F - 6:30 PM</b>      |
| <b>ALANON</b>                         | <b>Tu - 7:30 PM</b>                  |
| <b>Adventure</b>                      | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Sun. - 7:00 PM</b> |



| <u>Date</u> | <u>Time</u> | <u>Jan. Event</u>               |
|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 1           | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion             |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class               |
| 5           | 7:00 PM     | Epiphany<br>Worship / Communion |
| 7           | 9:00 AM     | Food Pantry Distribution        |
| 8           | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion             |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class               |
| 15          | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion             |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class               |
| 21          | 9:00 AM     | Food Pantry Distribution        |
| 22          | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion             |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class               |
| 29          | 9:00 AM     | Worship / Communion             |
|             | 10:15 AM    | Adult Bible Class               |

## Hymns of the Month

**December:** (Advent): "The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns" (# 348)

The origins of this hymn are as mysterious as its haunting melody. The author, John Brownlie, included it in a collection of his translations from the early Greek Orthodox Church, but the original version was never found. Perhaps he wrote it himself in the style of these early hymns. The text compares the coming of Jesus Christ to the dawning of a new day. It will be brighter than His first coming at Bethlehem, and even brighter than Easter morning, as He comes again with glory on the last day.

**January:** (Epiphany): "O God of God, O Light of Light" (810)

This hymn was written by John Julian, an Anglican priest, and first sung at a choir festival on April 16, 1883. Julian studied church music and published a dictionary of over 400,000 hymns (he did not include any of his own, due to modesty). This song begins and ends with a vision of the glories of heaven. The middle verses tell of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, and especially the Old Testament prophecies that promised these events. The language may seem a little out of date, but the grand poetry adds to the beauty of this hymn of praise.

# Dec. / Jan. Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

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## Dec. Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

**Dec. 4** Alden Ketchum  
Frank Oslakovic  
Richard Clark  
Nick Trojanowski

**Dec. 11** Ed Neaves  
Bob Green  
A.J. Bray  
Ray Bennett

**Dec. 18** Glen Werth  
Bill Weems  
Howard Johnson  
Mark Trojanowski

**Dec. 24** **Christmas Eve 7:00 PM**  
Ed Neaves  
Glen Werth  
Richard Clark  
Bob Green

**Dec. 25** **Christmas Day 10:00 AM**  
Frank Oslakovic  
Glen Werth  
Mary Slepski  
Howard Johnson

## Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

**Dec. 4** Mark Trojanowski

**Dec. 11** Ray Bennett

**Dec. 18** Bill Weems

**Dec. 24** Jim Kramer

## Advent 7:00 PM

**Dec. 7** Ed Neaves  
Glen Werth  
Bob Green

**Dec. 14** Gene Osmanski  
Frank Oslakovic  
Howard Johnson

**Dec. 21** Richard Clark  
Alden Ketchum  
Mary Slepski

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## Jan. Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

**Jan. 1** Glen Werth  
Ed Neaves  
Bob Green  
Ray Bennett

**Jan. 5** **Epiphany 7:00 PM**  
Gene Osmanski  
Frank Oslakovic  
Alden Ketchum  
Howard Johnson

**Jan. 8** Richard Clark  
Ed Neaves  
Mark Trojanowski  
Nick Trojanowski

**Jan. 15** Gene Osmanski  
Bill Weems  
Bob Green  
Howard Johnson

**Jan. 22** Frank Oslakovic  
Alden Ketchum  
Mark Trojanowski  
Nick Trojanowski

**Jan. 29** Ed Neaves  
Gene Osmanski  
Glen Werth  
Ray Bennett

## Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

**Jan. 1** Ed Neaves

**Jan. 8** Gene Osmanski

**Jan. 15** Nick Trojanowski

**Jan. 22** Debbie Hochgesang

**Jan. 29** Gene Osmanski

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## **Special Project**

The Trustees and other volunteers will begin making improvements in the parsonage. Materials will be purchased with donations from pastor and special project envelopes to be provided. Asbestos pipe insulation will also be removed.

This is NOT a budgeted project. No weekly donations for current expenses will be used. Work will progress as special project donations are received.