

FAITH NEWSLETTER

Dec. 2015 / Jan. 2016



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we finish the year 2015 together and look forward to 2016, it is helpful to pause for a moment.

We remember with thanksgiving the many ways that the Lord has blessed us in the past year. Here are just a few:

- We had the joy of celebrating our 75th Anniversary as a congregation together, as well as the joy of gathering each week to receive our Lord's gifts of forgiveness and life.
- There was the Fashion Show, Trivia Night and a few more rounds of Bingo.
- Improvements were made in the parsonage through the addition of new windows.
- We have a new constitution, and our new pictorial directory is on the way.
- New members joined our fellowship, and others have passed on to glory.

You may be wondering, "What's next?" as we look towards 2016 and beyond.

- There are some things that will not change:
- We will continue to gather together to hear God's Word, receive Jesus' body and blood, and respond with our prayers and songs of thanksgiving using the treasured hymns and liturgy of our faith.
- We will continue to grow together in God's Word through Bible Class and Sunday School.
- We will continue to serve the needy in our community through our Food Pantry.

But there are always new ways that we can strengthen our connections to one another as a congregation and to reach out to those in our neighborhoods and families.

I would like for you to join me for a special event on Saturday, December 12th called ***Faith in Focus***. We will talk about the blessings that God has given to us as a congregation and how we can best put them to good use in the coming year and beyond. In our discussion we will consider our broader goals and priorities as a congregation. We will meet in the church basement from 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM. (There will be plenty of time for breaks and refreshments.) We will listen to God's Word and to one another as we look for ways to reach out with His message of hope and life in the years to come.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Birkholz

In and Around Faith Church

Ladies Aid

A big thank you to everyone who made our Christmas Bazaar a success. We really appreciated the help and support from non-ladies aid members who came willingly to work hard in order to make things go smoothly. This shows we are truly a "family of Faith". It also helps us continue our mission work and the projects for Faith.

All ladies of Faith Church are invited to our annual Christmas Party Pot Luck. It is Dec. 3rd at 6:30 PM in the Parish Hall. Please let us know if you plan to attend. Please bring a side dish (Chicken will be provided). If you care to participate in the grab bag, please bring a \$5.00 wrapped grab bag gift.

Remember we have no meeting in January.

May you and your families have a blessed Christmas and New Year.

Food Pantry Needs

During the Advent Season we will be collecting non-food items for the Food Pantry. Please consider giving as you are able:

- Week of November 29th – Toilet Paper
 - Week of December 6th – Paper Towels
 - Week of December 13th – Laundry Detergent
 - Week of December 20th – Dish Soap
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Southside Pregnancy Center

On December 20th we will hear the story of the annunciation, how the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus. For nine months Jesus grew within her, as we all grew within our own mothers. It is important that we do all that we can to support unborn children and the mothers who carry them. We will be receiving a special door offering on December 20th to help the work of the Southside Pregnancy Center right here in Oak Lawn.

Advent Midweek Services

December 2nd: Lighting of the Christmas Tree

Our Lord works through trees. He placed the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, and used the tree of the cross to bring us salvation. There are no Christmas trees mentioned in the Bible, but we will still give thanks for how the evergreen reminds us of the eternal life we have through Jesus Christ. Join us at 6:00 PM to decorate, and then for a special evening prayer service at 7:00 PM to light and bless the tree.

December 9th: Lessons and Carols

There is an old English tradition to read through the Scripture lessons that both foretell and proclaim our Savior's birth, interwoven with well-known Christmas carols. Our evening prayer service will be based on this tradition.

December 16th: O Antiphons

You probably know the Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." What you may not know is that each of the seven verses of this hymn is based on a series of ancient prayers that were prayed at Vespers (Evening Prayer) during the week before Christmas Eve. We will listen to the Scripture verses that inspired these prayers and sing them together as we await the coming of Emmanuel, "God with us."

German Service Dec. 13th

A German language Christmas Service will be held at Zion Lutheran Church, 9000 Menard Avenue in Oak Lawn on Sunday, December 13th at 2:00 PM. The preacher will be the Rev. George Mrochen.

Christmas Caroling

On Sunday, December 19th we will go to Brookdale of Burr Ridge, where Dr. Betty Baker resides, and sing Christmas Carols for all the residents there. We will meet at church at 1:15 PM. Everyone is welcome to come and bring the joy of Christ through song as we celebrate His birth.

December at Faith Church

Hymn of the Month

Advent: “O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide” (# 355)

This hymn paints one of the boldest pictures of Jesus’ coming found anywhere in our hymnal. Can you imagine Jesus tearing open heaven and bursting through to make a way for you to join Him there? These opening lines are inspired by Isaiah 64:1, “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence.” The other verses present equally vivid pictures of Jesus’ coming, first as dew and rain from heaven, then as a flower in bloom, a rising star, and finally the strong arm that leads us “from exile to our promised land.”

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve: 7:00 PM

This is our traditional candlelight service. Come to hear the story of the angels and the shepherds and the baby in the manger born for you.

Christmas Day: 9:00 AM

The Christmas Day service focuses on the opening verses of John’s gospel, especially these words, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Come to ponder the mystery of our Lord’s incarnation.

Poinsettias

Help make our sanctuary beautiful for the celebration of our Lord’s birth! You may purchase a red, white, or pink poinsettia to place in the church for the Christmas services and then take home to enjoy with your family. The cost is \$12 each.

2016 Altar Flowers

Please consider marking special dates and anniversaries by placing a flower arrangement on the altar in the coming year. Each arrangement is \$17.50.

Confession and Forgiveness December 22nd & 23rd

In Advent we hear the call of John the Baptist, “Prepare the way of the Lord!” and “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” The best way to prepare for Christmas is to repent, and you are invited to come and confess your sins and receive forgiveness as we get ready to celebrate our Lord’s birth. Pastor Birkholz will be available on Tuesday, December 22nd from 10:00AM - 11:30AM or on Wednesday, December 23rd from 7:30PM - 9:00PM to hear confession and speak our Lord’s word of forgiveness to you. If you cannot make either time, please call for an appointment.

Other Holidays

St. John the Evangelist, December 27th

Many of the most memorable passages of Scripture come from St. John’s gospel. He records for us these words of Jesus: “For God so loved the world...” “I am the Good Shepherd...” “It is finished...” and many more. On December 27th we give thanks for the work of St. John particularly as someone who has written down so many precious words of our Savior, the Word made flesh.

St. Timothy, January 24th

St. Paul trained Timothy to be a pastor and a leader who would continue his work after he had gone. On January 24th we give thanks to God for St. Timothy and all faithful pastors who serve us in Jesus’ name.



January at Faith Church

Hymn of the Month

Epiphany: “Rise, Shine, You People” (# 825)

Epiphany is a season of light that conquers the darkness around us. This hymn calls us to shine that light into our dark world through our words and life of witness. The tune for this new hymn should be familiar, as we sung it with “Saints, See the Cloud of Witnesses,” which we’ve sung many times in the past year.

Epiphany Service – January 6th

On January 6th the twelve days of Christmas will be over, and we celebrate our Lord’s appearing to the Magi, who were guided to Bethlehem by the star. This year Faith will host the congregations of our area for a special joint Epiphany Service on Wednesday, January 6th at 7:00 PM.

Special music will be provided by the Southwest Lutheran Chorus. We are also considering including a potluck dinner. Please watch for further information in the weeks to come.

Home Blessings

As we remember the visit of the Magi to the home of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, it is a good time to ask the Lord’s blessing with us in our own homes. The season of Epiphany is traditionally when homes are blessed, and yes, this is a Lutheran tradition as well.

This year the season of Epiphany is from January 6th through February 9th. Please contact Pastor Birkholz if you would like your home blessed during this time.

Installation of Officers

Thank you to everyone who agreed to serve as officers of the congregation in the coming year. Officers will be installed on Sunday, January 10th. We will also have our January Voters’ Meeting that morning after church.

Recognition of New Member and Anniversaries of Membership – January 31st

We give thanks to God for the following people who became confirmed members of Faith in 2015:

Katherine Belser
Nick Bieniek
Sean Bray
Dora Haynes
Marshall Peterson
Jenn Welter

In 2016 the following members will celebrate significant anniversary of confirmed membership at Faith:

65 Years: Grace Scott, Gene Tebo
40 Years: Lucille Henson
30 Years: Bill Weems, Bob Young
20 Years: Danielle Jimenez, April Osmanski, Kari Robbins
15 Years: Mark Trojanowski, Brian Weems
10 Years: Ray Bennett, Tom Mackey, Walter Renn, Britney Rheinwald
5 Years: Carol Piergies

We will honor these members with a special brunch held on Sunday, January 31st immediately after the church service.

Lenten Devotions

It may seem strange to think about Lent already, but Easter is early this year, and so Lent starts with Ash Wednesday on February 10th. This year we will use Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) as the basis for our Lenten meditations. You will be invited to write a devotion on a short section of these verses for our congregational devotional booklet. Please watch for more information in January.

Schedule of Dec. 2015 / Jan. 2016 Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>December Event</u>
2	7:00 PM	Advent Service
5	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
6	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
9	7:00 PM	Advent Service
13	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
16	7:00 PM	Advent Service
19	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
20	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
24	7:00 PM	Christmas Eve Worship / Communion
25	7:00 PM	Christmas Day Worship / Communion
27	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>January Event</u>
2	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
3	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
6	7:00 PM	Epiphany Worship / Communion
10	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
16	9:00 AM	Food Pantry Distribution
17	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
24	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class
31	9:00 AM	Worship / Communion
	10:15 AM	Sunday School
	10:30 AM	Adult Bible Class

Weekly Meetings

Bible Study	Fri. - 11:00 AM
Confirmation Class	Fri. - 4:30 PM
AA Groups	Mon-Wed-Fri - 6:00 PM
	Sat. - 8:00 AM
Alanon	Tue. - 7:30 PM

THE *Wonder* OF
CHRISTMAS



Dec. 2015 / Jan. 2016 Elders, Ushers & Lay Readers

Dec. Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

Dec. 6 Alden Ketchum
Gene Osmanski
Mike Kampenga
Katie Kampenga

Dec. 13 Frank Oslakovic
Ed Neaves
Howard Johnson
Mark Trojanowski

Dec. 20 Alden Ketchum
Richard Clark
Marilyn Diehl
Eleonore Lang

Dec. 27 Frank Oslakovic
Gene Osmanski
Ray Bennett
Dora Haynes

Midweek Services 7:00 PM

Dec. 2 Ed Neaves
Richard Clark

Dec. 9 Alden Ketchum
Gene Osmanski

Dec. 16 Frank Oslakovic
Howard Johnson

Dec. 24 Richard Clark
Ed Neaves
Mike Kampenga
Katie Kampenga

Christmas Day 9:00 AM

Dec. 25 Frank Oslakovic
Gene Osmanski
Howard Johnson
Ray Bennett

Jan. Worship 9:00 AM Sunday

Jan. 3 Richard Clark
Ed Neaves
Mary Slepki
Gail Henson

Jan. 10 Ed Neaves
Howard Johnson
Mary Slepki
Gail Henson

Jan. 17 Alden Ketchum
Gene Osmanski
Eric Rosenbrock
Ray Bennett

Jan. 24 Richard Clark
Mark Trojanowski
Mike Kampenga
Katie Kampenga

Jan. 31 Ed Neaves
Frank Oslakovic
Marilyn Diehl
Eleonore Lang

Lay Readers 9:00 AM Sunday

Dec. 6 Gene Osmanski

Dec. 13 Mike Kampenga

Dec. 20 Katie Kampenga

Dec. 27 Ray Bennett

Jan. 3 Ed Neaves

Jan. 10 Debbie Hochgesang

Jan. 17 Mike Kampenga

Jan. 24 Mark Trojanowski

Jan. 31 Gene Osmanski

