



Sunday Worship: 8:15 and 10:45 a.m.

Wednesday worship at 6:00 p.m. in the Chapel

The 8:15 Sunday service is broadcast at 11 a.m. on KTOE 1420 AM / KTOE 102.7 FM.

720 South Second Street  
Mankato, MN 56001  
Phone: (507) 388-2925  
Fax: (507) 388-6920  
E-mail: blchurch@hickorytech.net  
Website: www.bethlehemmankato.org

Pastor Jay Dahlvang: 387-4187  
E-mail: pastorjay@hickorytech.net  
Pastor Collette Broady Preiss: 380-3049 (cell)  
E-mail: pastorcollette@hickorytech.net  
Lance Quick: 317-2181 (cell)  
E-mail: lquick@hickorytech.net  
Leah Garry: 382-2205 (cell)  
E-mail: lgarry@hickorytech.net

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A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JAY DAHLVANG

Advent/Christmas

*“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us.”*

As we gather in this place sharing the name of the village where our Savior was born, we anticipate the celebration of the coming of our God in the flesh.

We start the church year in Advent, a word that means “coming”. In this time, we rejoice in the coming of the God that transcends time—the child born and laid in the Bethlehem manger long ago, the Son of Man who returns on clouds in power and glory at the end, our Lord Jesus who comes to us day by day with forgiveness, life, and salvation. Along with our Sunday morning worship life, we will worship the always coming Christ on **Wednesday nights in the chapel at 6 p.m.** For the first three weeks of Advent, our Wednesday services will be centered on Mary’s song of praise from the first chapter of Luke known as the Magnificat. On the fourth Wednesday of Advent, **December 21, we will gather in the sanctuary at 6 p.m.** as the children from the Bethlehem Child Care Center tell us the story of Jesus’ birth.

**On December 24,** we hear in story and song of the Word becoming flesh and living among us, and we meet him in Word and Sacrament. We will worship at **4 p.m. and 7 p.m. On Christmas Day,**

**December 25, we will worship at 9:45 a.m.** Thanks to all those who will share their gifts in worship leadership and music, reflecting the light of the Bethlehem child in their songs and praise.

This is the time of the year to be with loved ones. I am thankful for and glad to be with the loved ones of Bethlehem.

~ Pr. Jay

Building Update

At our Annual Meeting, we heard about our progress in renovating and updating our facility. In the coming days, the council will appoint an expanded building committee and form committees to ensure adequate financing and to keep you informed. We will survey the building from top to bottom so that what needs to be fixed or replaced will be completed, and so that just as we have inherited a building that has stood without major repair for forty years, we will pass a well-built and maintained structure on to those who follow us here. We will begin researching and consulting with capital campaign firms who will assist us so that we will have the resources necessary to complete the project. We will pray and talk and listen as together we seek God’s good and gracious will for our life together. These are exciting days at

Bethlehem! Thanks for your support of God’s work among us.

Sharing Our Stories

During the forty days of Lent, we are putting together a booklet to be written by Bethlehem members as a daily devotional. We invite you to choose a favorite Bible verse(s) followed by thoughtful and prayerful consideration as to why this passage holds special meaning to you. The NCD Health Team hopes that you will be one of the forty who feel inspired to participate. Please indicate your willingness to share by signing your name on the sheet on the office counter, and then begin the task. You and those who read the devotional booklet will be blessed by your witness. **Submissions will be due January 15.** Thank you!

~ Natural Church Development Health Team

**DEADLINE for the January Star is December 15.**



**DO YOU GET** The Bethlehem **E-NEWS?** E-news goes directly to the inbox of many Bethlehem members and friends, informing them of all that is happening in and around Bethlehem. Do you get the E-news? To subscribe, send an e-mail to [blchurch@hickorytech.net](mailto:blchurch@hickorytech.net) with “subscribe to E-news” in the subject line.

## PASTOR COLLETTE; DECEMBER SERVING GROUP

### *Jesus Christ is Born (Again)*

“What is that?” Ollie asks from the back seat. I look and see that he’s pointing at the street lights on Belgrade in North Mankato, which are already adorned with giant light-up poinsettias. When I explain to him that they are decorations for Christmas, he says, “huh?”, his universal noise for things not yet understood.

So, I explain to him that Christmas, for him, is two things: Jesus’ birthday and Ollie’s birthday. He’s obviously more excited about the second (“I want birthday cake!” he says). And I’m excited too, because this will be the first year he really understands what his birthday is, and that he goes from being one to being two. It is such a delight for us as parents to celebrate his growth and his place in our family.

But, as always, I’m excited about Jesus’ birthday too, which is a different kind of celebration. We’re not putting 2011 candles

on a cake and reminiscing about how big he’s gotten over the last year. We’re not even really celebrating how big his following has gotten over the last two millennia. Jesus’ birthday-- Christmas -- is a celebration of Jesus being born anew into our lives every year and every day. Every time the Christ child appears in the manger at Bethlehem, it should be a revelation like the birth of your own child. It should have as much impact on our lives as the addition of new family members. It should bring us to our knees in amazement and gratitude that the Lord of heaven and earth would come to live with us, as one of us, simply because he wants to know and love us better.

So, as you count down to Christmas this year using an Advent calendar or wreath, night devotions, or simply x’s on your wall calendar, prepare yourself for Jesus to be born again in your life. Prepare yourself to receive again the gifts he brings to our lives: never-ending love,

never-failing forgiveness, and ever-present hope. May he be a welcome addition to you and your family again this year.

*~ Pr. Collette*



### DECEMBER SERVING GROUP ~ Chairs: Florence Sassenberg & Eunice Sassenberg (388-2191)



**Monthly  
Serving  
Group**

Russ & Dee Ahlstrom  
Rae Allan  
Beverly Alley  
Craig & Debbie Anderson  
John & Marilyn Biedscheid  
Sue Carlson  
Craig Dalluge  
Eileen Dalluge  
Gert DeRemer  
Al & Joan Eichers  
Mayo Granaas

Deb Gruhlke  
James & Kari Halbur  
Ross Hall  
Simon & Dawn Hernandez  
Bob Ihrig  
Cathy Janssen  
Ellen Morrow  
Nancy Mott  
Les & Lavon Mutch  
Jon & Pat Nelson  
Dave & Shelley Pettis

Gary & Amanda Pipes  
LaJune Polzin  
Dennis & Karen Sandersfeld  
Carl & Rita Schoenstedt  
Charlie Summers  
Ann Thorkelson  
Rosie Throldahl  
Lenore Wallace  
Karen Watschke  
Bob Wold  
Shirley Wold  
Don & Marilyn Wolner



**Monthly  
Serving  
Group**

# BETHLEHEM FELLOWSHIP



## Mange Takk!

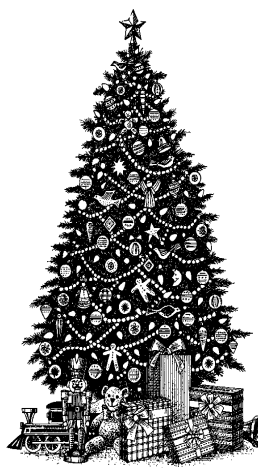
One comment heard over and over following the Nordic Bazaar was this: **“It was so much fun!”**. Truly it was great!

Such a splendid day came about because people were able to give of their time, talents, and resources so that others could experience joy and at the same time support mission work as the proceeds from the event are distributed.

The list of people to thank is very long -- not wanting to omit any names of those who served, we offer a huge, soft, and cozy blanket **“THANK YOU”** (mange takk). As you read this, thank yourself also. It is through the work of many that the load becomes light.

We invite and encourage involvement in the 2012 Bazaar on **November 7, 2012**. Plan ahead as to how you can use your time, talents, and resources to glorify God.

~ Bethlehem Bazaar Coordinators



Please join the congregation in celebrating Christmas by picking a name off the Sharing Tree and attending the Christmas Open House with coffee and treats on **Sunday, December 4, from 9:00 -10:30 a.m. in the Heritage Room**. Gifts for the Sharing Tree can be brought to the church office anytime before December 16. This event is sponsored by the Fellowship Committee and the December serving group.

## WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPERS (in the Dining Room)

**SERVED FROM 5:00-6:30**

### December Menus:

**December 7** Turkey on a bun and potato soup

**December 14** Chicken kiev, wild rice, cranberries, and California blend vegetables

**There will be no suppers on December 21 or 28.**



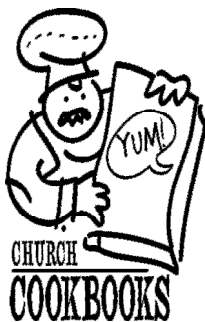
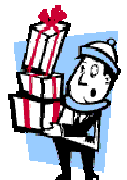
## **FAIR TRADE THANKS YOU!**

Many thanks to all who made purchases at the Bazaar that brought our sales to \$1,141. By choosing to buy fair trade, you have helped many artisans and farmers to receive a fair wage for their labor. Remember that you can still buy coffee, tea, cocoa, and chocolate bars in the office. They make great gifts! Bars are now available in milk chocolate with almonds, coffee milk chocolate, dark chocolate, and mint dark chocolate. You can purchase chocolate bars whenever Debbie's office is open.



## **Buy a Present for a Pathstone Resident!**

Pick up a bow in the narthex and purchase a gift for a resident at Pathstone Living. Attached to the bows are tags, which list items that the residents have requested. After you purchase the gift, wrap it, put the bow/tag on it, and bring it back to the church office or drop it off at Pathstone **on or before December 14**. Thank you for helping to make Christmas a little brighter for some of the Pathstone residents!



## **Bethlehem Lutheran Church Cookbooks are still available!**

These would make great Christmas gifts! The cost is \$12.00 each. The cookbooks feature 250 recipes and are available for purchase in the church office. All proceeds will go to support various missions supported by Bethlehem Women.

~ The Mom's Circle



Pastor Howie saves the third Sunday of Advent.

**December Mission Project:  
God's Global Barnyard**

At this time in the church year, we often turn our hearts to those in our community and around the world with whom we can share God's blessings. Our Bethlehem family is acknowledged again and again for the generous contributions made to mission projects, including our annual participation in God's Global Barnyard.

As a part of ELCA Good Gifts, God's Global Barnyard is a creative way to care for those around the world who live with hunger and poverty. You can choose from a number of sustainable life-giving solutions that mean the most to you and your loved ones. As the familiar Chinese proverb reads, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime", so it is with a fish pond, flock of chicks, or goat given through God's Global Barnyard.

Your gift, in honor of or in memory of a loved one, has the ability to provide a family with food, funds, and fertilizer, breaking the cycle of hunger and poverty.

Look for order forms and gift cards to honor and acknowledge. They will be in the bulletins and in the

Narthex throughout the month of December. Checks can be made out to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, noting the monthly mission project on the memo line.

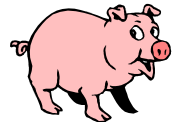
**If you would like to donate to this worthy cause in honor or in memory of someone and would like their names printed in special bulletin inserts for the Christmas services, the information needs to be given to Debbie, Elizabeth, or Christine in the church office no later than noon on Wednesday, December 21.**

Thank you for your continued support of a mission that changes the lives of those helped by your generous gifts.

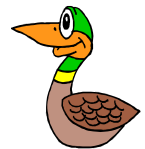
*~ Bethlehem Community & Global Mission Board*



- Pig: \$30**
- Cow: \$500**
- Goat: \$50**
- Chicks: \$10**
- Alpaca: \$175**
- Sheep: \$125**



- Stock a fish farm: \$250**
- Duck: \$20**
- Family Farm: \$715**



*Dear Friends and Members  
of Bethlehem ~*

It's hard to believe that, as I write this, the fall semester is almost 2/3 of the way through. There seems to be a lull in campus life now, as students rest between mid-terms and final exams.

The ministry here continues to expand. Ten students from Crossroads joined people from throughout Mankato to "Rake the Town". We've grown to an average worship attendance of between 20-25 students each Wednesday night, and we welcome newcomers each week. Couch Worship has been a big hit -- on the last Wednesday night of each month, we move all of the chairs out of the sanctuary and pull in the couches from the hallways. There are only two rules: take off your shoes, and stay on the couch (when we stand up to sing, we even stand on the couches!). It's a truly informal worship service, and so much fun. Attendance at "Lunch 4 \$1" remains in the range of 20-30 students each week, and the yoga class led by Amanda

Klanderman on Thursday nights is packed. GroupLife, a discussion group led by Matt and Josie Lust from Bethlehem, continues to be a vehicle through which students connect with God and with each other through shared meals and conversation. Matt and Josie are such good cooks that the students would come for the food alone, but they are fed much more than physical food on Sunday evenings!

Thank you for making the ministry here possible. Because of your support, we have been able not only to improve the building, but also to increase the level of staffing. My call will move from 1/2 to 3/4 time beginning in 2012. I am very much looking forward to increasing the time I spend with the students here.

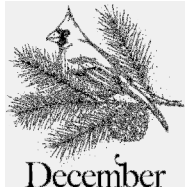
God bless you and keep you.

Sincerely,  
*Rev. Tammy Dahlvang  
Lutheran Campus Ministry  
at Minnesota State University-Mankato  
A Ministry of the ELCA*

# CALENDAR

## Wednesday Evening Schedule

- 5:00 – 8:00** Child care available (infant to age 5, nursery area located in basement)
- 5:00 – 5:55** Chancel Choir (adults, meets in Choir Room - basement)
- 5:00 – 6:30** Supper served (all are welcome – dining room; no suppers on Dec. 21 & 28)
- 5:15 – 6:00** Junior Gospbells (practice held in Sanctuary)
- 6:00 – 6:30** Worship in the Chapel (*no service on December 28*)
- 6:00 – 6:40** Kids' Club (meets in the "Moved by the Spirit" room downstairs, for kids in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade -- a time of music, a message, lessons, and activities)
- 6:00 – 7:45** TIMES (Teens In Mission Enthusiastically Serving) in Grounds for Joy
- 6:00 – 7:45** Confirmation classes (grades 7 – 9, Youth Room on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)
- 6:30 – 7:30** Bethlehem Gospbells (practice held in Sanctuary)
- 6:45 – 7:40** Gather Choir (adults, meets in Choir Room – basement)
- 7:45 – 8:30** The Messengers (music & drama group for Youth grades 7 – 12, meets in the Chapel)



# December 2011



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<b>1</b> 4 pm - Youth Outreach meeting - GFJ	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> 1 pm - Fellowship Committee will set up for Sharing Tree
<b>4</b> 8:15 & 10:45 - Worship 9:30 - Ed. Hour, coffee, Sharing Tree open house 6:30 pm - Financial Peace University (FPU) in the Heritage Room	<b>5</b> 5:30 pm - Mankato Children's Chorus 5:45 pm - TOPS 7 pm - Youth Band	<b>6</b> 7 am - Café Ambrosia Bible Study 9 am - Quilters Noon - Men's Bible Study 1 pm - Library Board 5:30 - Youth Board 6 pm - Music & Worship, Children's Board, Earth Stewards 7 pm - C&G Missions, Evangelism, Facilities	<b>7</b> 9 am - TOPS; Sarah Circle in GFJ 9:30 am - Rachael Circle at 101 Main 10:30 - Book of Faith Study 1 pm - Staff mtg. <b>Wed. Evening Activities</b> 7:30 pm - Adult Ed. Board	<b>8</b> 10 am - noon - BLCW in the library 11:30-1:00 - Mankato Area Ministerial Assn. - GFJ	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> 9 am - noon - Parents' Day Out - Youth Rm. & nursery 4:30-8:30 pm - Sons of Norway - Dining Room
<b>11</b> 8:15 & 10:45 - Worship Choir Christmas program at both svcs. 9:30 - Education Hour, coffee 6:30 pm - FPU	<b>12</b> 5:7 pm - McEduicator Night at McDonald's 5:9 pm - Mankato Children's Chorus 5:45 pm - TOPS 7 pm - Youth Band	<b>13</b> 7 am - Café Ambrosia Bible Study 10:15 am - Communion at Pathstone Noon - Men's Bible Study 1 pm - Library Board 6 pm - Fellowship Comm.	<b>14</b> 7:45 am - Finance Comm. 9 am - TOPS 9 am - Martha Circle at Kathy Crosswell's home 10:30 - Book of Faith Study 1 pm - Staff mtg. 3:30 pm - Women's Bible Study - GFJ <b>Wed. Evening Activities</b>	<b>15</b> 6-8 pm - BCCC - Heritage Rm.	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b> 8:15 & 10:45 - Worship Christmas program 9:30 - Ed. Hour, coffee 9:15 & 11:45 am - Prayer Team in sanctuary Noon - serve meal at the Salvation Army 6:30 pm - FPU	<b>19</b> 5:45 pm - TOPS 6:30 - Mom's Circle 7 pm - Youth Band	<b>20</b> 7 am - Café Ambrosia Bible Study 9 am - Quilters Noon - Men's Bible Study 1 pm - Library Board 4 pm - Website Comm. 7 pm - Council	<b>21</b> 9 am - TOPS 10:30 - Book of Faith Study 1 pm - Staff mtg. 6 pm - BCCC program in the sanctuary <b>Wed. Evening Activities</b> NO SUPPER	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> CHRISTMAS EVE  <i>Worship services at 4 pm &amp; 7 pm</i>
<b>25</b> 9:45 - Worship  <b>Christmas Day Service</b>	<b>26</b> Church Office Closed	<b>27</b> 7 am - Café Ambrosia Bible Study Noon - Men's Bible Study 1 pm - Library Board 2 pm - Lydia Circle - GFJ	<b>28</b> 9 am - TOPS 1 pm - Staff mtg. 3:30 pm - Women's Bible Study - GFJ 6 pm - Welcome Back party for youth - GFJ <b>NO WED. EVENING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>

# CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTRY

## December LIGHT News

**December 11** will be the children's Christmas party. We will spend part of the LIGHT hour working on our Christmas program, and the other part celebrating the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus!

The children pre-K thru 6<sup>th</sup> grade will perform the annual Christmas program in church at the **10:45 service on Sunday, December 18.** Please do not miss this special event! All of the children will be

singing, and some will even be in costumes! It will be a special day for all involved.

**NO LIGHT on Sunday, December 25 and Sunday, January 1** due to Christmas & New Year's Holidays.

The 4th rotation will begin on **Sunday, January 8.**

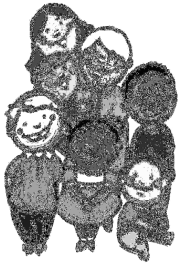
The children's offering fund for December will be donated to God's Global Barnyard. The money will

pay for animals. Those animals provide families with food, funds, and fertilizer—all for a better future. Please consider sending an offering with your child to help him/her learn the importance of giving back to others by supporting this wonderful mission.



***Come and see  
how God  
Lights Our  
Way!***

**We Welcome Children!** We want children to know they are welcome in our church. We offer children's worship bags with activities each week as well as a children's bulletin to help them with their worship experience. Please see the ushers for bags & bulletins. We also have a professionally-staffed nursery with a parent paging system available. *Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ~ Matthew 19:14*



## **Wednesday Night Kids' Club is here at Bethlehem!**

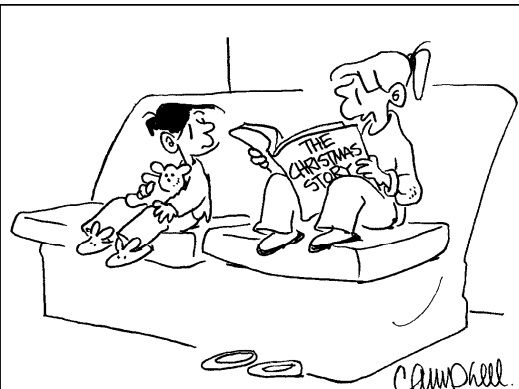


Bethlehem Kids' Club is a group of students (kindergarten through 6th grade) who meet in the "Moved by the Spirit" room on Wednesday nights from 6:00-6:40. During this time, we grow in our relationship with Jesus. We praise God through music, and we take time to learn from our Bibles. For the month of December, we will be working on the books of the Bible.

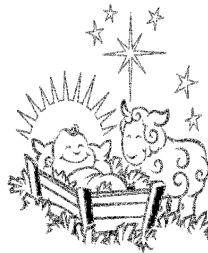
We will have no Kids' Club on **Wednesday, December 21, or Wednesday, December 28,** due to Christmas break.

On **Wednesday, December 14,** the children of the Bethlehem Kids' Club will sing at the 6:00 p.m. Wednesday worship service in the Chapel.

If you have questions about Kids' Club, please see Leah Garry or Laurie Rossow.



"Because they didn't have e-mail then. That's why God sent an angel to proclaim the baby's birth."



"I'm going to be a chorus member in the Christmas pageant. I was going to be a shepherd 'til I found out I'd have to wear my bathrobe and count sheep."



## **Parents' Morning Out!**

This is a great opportunity for parents to do some Christmas shopping, bake cookies, or just enjoy some peace and quiet! It will be offered on **Saturday, December 10, from 9:00-12:00.** We are extending the offer to all children ages 6 months up to 6th grade. The suggested donation amount is \$5.00 for each child -- that is for the ENTIRE 3-hour period. We must have children registered by **Sunday, December 4,** to help us to ensure proper staffing. We hope to have your family participate in this fun experience. Questions? Please contact Leah Garry.



As I write this, we are fresh off our trip to Eagle Bluff Environmental Center, where we did climbing, a group challenges course, and a tree tops rope course.

The theme of our trip was "Risk Taking Faith -- Leap Before You Look". There were 22 of us making the trip: 17 youth and 5 adults. Thanks to Kelly Sulfer, Kathy Drummer, Gene Bentdahl, and Brad Butler for chaperoning our group. Eagle Bluff is a different type of trip and challenges us more than any other activity that we do. The Boundary Waters is close to it, as it is in touch with nature, but the emphasis is totally different. Our theme made us (adults and youth) step out of our comfort zone and push our boundaries. The trip is about conquering our fears, knowing our limitations, and understanding ourselves.

Putting that into our group environment translated into working together to achieve what we cannot do by ourselves.

We used **Hebrews 11:6** -- "*And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him*" -- as our theme text. Faith is trust in God, but to gain this trust we must first leap into the unknown. The youth tested their faith by trusting the system of safety harnesses. They learned the mind has power. Even though they knew logically that they were safe, it is still difficult to walk a wire 30 feet above the ground. Every nerve and impulse worked against them as they conquered the fear to achieve the result. Faith in God has similar feelings. We must trust what we cannot see, and unless we trust we will not see. There are a lot of personal pleas

and prayers going out when you are frightened.

We also learned community. We found that each of us has unique strengths and weaknesses. Each of the youth took leadership roles at different times due to the positioning which they found themselves or personal strengths. Each needed others to get through the various hurdles. All succeeded and failed. All had fun. Hopefully we were all strengthened by the experience. We (adult chaperones) were very proud of each youth. Our group conducted ourselves with dignity and class. We left a good impression on Vaughn (our trainer from Eagle Bluff). It reinforced my belief that I am very fortunate to be a part of these young lives.

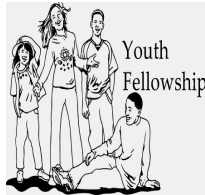
See you in church. ~ Lance

## TIMES KIDS

**(TEENS IN MISSION ENTHUSIASTICALLY SERVING)**

**Wednesdays ~ 6:00-7:45 p.m. in Grounds for Joy**

- November 30 - Ring Bells for Salvation Army
- December 7 - Bake Christmas Cookies
- December 14 - Singing Christmas Cards
- December 21 - Singing Christmas Cards
- December 28 - NO TIMES (Happy Christmas Break!)



**The Fall Festival was a HUGE Success!** TIMES Teens provided entertainment and activities for over 40 kids at the fall festival held in Grounds for Joy on October 26! Cookie decorating, games, candy necklace making, pumpkin decorating, treasure hunts, and face painting were provided by these teens: Madi Bentdahl, Kenzie Doering, Maria Soroka, Emily Pipes, Matt Pipes, Megan Redling, and Sarah Blacksteid. Be sure and thank these teens for the awesome job they did!

### Youth Trip

## BIG PLANS, BIG GOALS FOR THE "BIG EASY"!



Fourteen youth have made the commitment to attend the youth gathering in New Orleans in July, 2012. This is just the beginning of the planning and preparing to gear up for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many of these teens. All youth have made a financial commitment towards this trip, but they will be working to raise funds throughout the next several months to subsidize the cost. Please prayerfully consider what you can do to help support these youth. The youth are also planning an exciting evening of food and entertainment for "Fat Tuesday" with a New Orleans party theme in February. Later in the spring, they will use some elbow grease to spiff up your vehicles at a car wash. Any and all financial support and prayers for a safe and successful trip are greatly appreciated!



"I don't know if they had infrared imaging equipment. I just know they were watching their flocks by night."

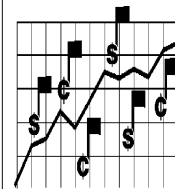


## Your Endowment Fund

The Endowment Committee would like to acquaint all Bethlehem members, but particularly our new members, with the work of the Endowment Fund. Gifts and bequests that are given to the Bethlehem Lutheran Endowment Fund remain as a permanent part (the principal amount) of the Endowment Fund. The funds are invested conservatively to avoid any loss of value of the principal amount, and only the earnings are distributed each year. As we are all

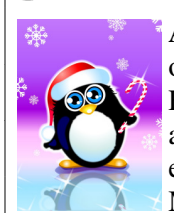
aware, interest rates have plummeted in recent years, so the dollars to be distributed have also plummeted! No principal dollars have been lost, and the Endowment Fund continues to be rock solid.

The Endowment Committee invites everyone to attend the Educational Forum on **Sunday, February 19, 2012!** It is important that everyone understands the rules and regulations of our Endowment Fund, and the forum will also give you the opportunity to meet the committee members. Should you have a question (or questions), please contact Mavis Saxton, Chair (387-3346) or Robert Qualset, Treasurer (388-4970).

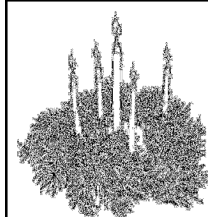


## Financial NOTES

The month-end financial report for October is all good news!! First, we had a very successful **stewardship** campaign. Pledge cards continue to come in, and the numbers still look very good. There will be a final report in next month's STAR. Member envelope giving remains strong at 97% of budget. The best news, however, is that the general fund balance at the end of October was a **positive** \$1,949. This is amazing, since the general fund balance at the end of September was a negative \$10,110. That means we came back \$12,059!! October is always a month when we expect to make up ground, but this was incredible. **Thank you!** Let's end the year with a positive general fund balance so that 2012 can be even better for Bethlehem.



**A note about cancellations...** In case of inclement weather on Sunday mornings, listen to KTOE 1420 AM/KTOE 102.7 FM for cancellation announcements for worship and church activities. In case of inclement weather on Wednesdays, our evening events will follow the cancellation decision of the Mankato Public Schools.



## Make your preparations 'Advent'-urous

Advent — the first season of the liturgical year — includes the four Sundays and weeks prior to December 25. Advent dates from the fourth century, when it lasted 40 days and included fasting and solemnity, much like Lent. Advent is from *Adventus*, which is Latin for “coming,” referring to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and also his second coming. The traditional colors of Advent are purple for penitence or blue for hope. Observing Advent is a meaningful, adventurous way to prepare for Christmas. Buy or make an Advent wreath and use candles of your choice: four blue, four purple, or three blue or purple and one pink. If you have a fifth spot, add one white Christ candle. During meals or devotions, light only one candle the first week. Add another for each new week (the pink candle traditionally marks the third week), concluding with the white candle (if you have one) on Christmas. The increasing light reminds us we’re getting closer to celebrating Christ’s light coming into the world.



**ECHO FOOD SHELF**  
In December, we'll be collecting “meal-makers” -- **Hamburger Helper, etc.**

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12-22-2003



## LIBRARY NEWS...

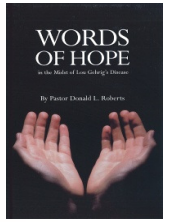
This is a reminder that our library has a large selection of Christmas and holiday books. We also have the old favorite holiday magazines of activities and pictures. For more information on other available holiday materials, use the Book By Subject reference notebook.

## DEVOTION/BIBLE STUDIES

### A Devotional from Pastor Don Roberts

Pastor Don Roberts served as pastor at Bethlehem from 1989-1996. He was diagnosed with ALS/Lou Gehrig's Disease in 1995 and continues to be an inspiration of life and faith to our congregation. His devotionals are written with the aid of a letterboard and an assistant. Pastor Don's book is available in the church office ~ \$15 each.

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see -- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people; to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."  
~ Luke 2:10-11*



This is Luke's account of the birth of Jesus. As we enter December, for some of you it will be a busy month -- perhaps too busy. For some of you, it will be a lonely month -- perhaps too lonely. As I have said previously, Jesus is not so much the "reason for the season" but the **answer** to the season. In this December, look to Christ. When we do this, it's amazing what he does. He has a marvelous way of making us look to the needs of others. Let's meet the needs of others. Let's listen

to the needs of others. When we do this, we are both blessed. When we do this, suddenly we find ourselves less busy or lonely. Look to Christ.

The birth of Christ says how much God loves us. God, the maker of this world, loved you enough to send his Son to die for you. God, the Father, knew what was going to happen. He sent his Son anyway. See how much God loves you! When you are feeling low self-esteem, look to Christ. He will lift you up. When

you are mired in guilt, look to Christ. He will forgive you. When you are lonely, look to Christ. You will find you are not that lonely anymore. Look to Christ in this December. You will see how much God loves you.



### ADULT FORUMS -- 9:30 a.m. in the HERITAGE ROOM



December 4  
December 11

December 18  
December 25

Sharing Tree open house  
Dr. Sarah Ruble from Gustavus Adolphus College -- "Conversion & Evangelism in a Pluralistic World"  
Star of Bethlehem video  
Christmas Day - no forum

**Prayers Wanted!** Our Bethlehem prayer team invites you to join us twice a month for a time of prayer, learning, and ministry to God's people at Bethlehem. The Prayer Team meets on the first Sunday of each month for a time of conversation, learning, and prayer. **We will meet after the services on the third Sunday of each month to pray with those who long for healing.** All are welcome -- tell Pastor Jay if you are interested.

### Mom's Circle Bible Study



Mom's Circle is a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our callings are to engage in ministry and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world. A group of moms with young children meets at **6:30 p.m.** on the third Monday of every month during the year. **We will meet at Leah Garry's home on Monday, December 19.**

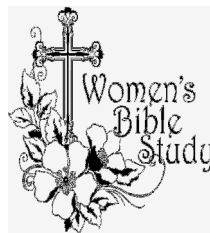
### *Men's* **Bible Study**



**Men's Tuesday Noon Bible Study** meets at 101 Main in the downtown City Center Hotel.

**Wednesday Women's Bible Discussion Group**

will meet on **Dec. 14 & 28** at **3:30 p.m.** in Grounds for Joy.



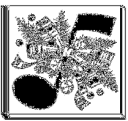
### **MORNING BIBLE STUDY**

#### Come to Café Ambrosia!

Join us every Tuesday morning at 7:00 a.m. at Café Ambrosia, which is located at 1720 Commerce Drive in North Mankato.

**Men & women are welcome.**

*Come and join us --  
we have room for more!*



A Musical Note from Laurie Rossow, Coordinator of Music

Advent is a time of expectation and preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth. The days leading up to Christmas are filled with distractions. There are presents to buy, parties to attend, cards to send, cookies to bake, Christmas programs and concerts to go to, family to see, and traditions to follow. We need help to cut through the many distractions if we are to focus our attention on Jesus. I encourage you to set aside some time with your family and friends to focus on Jesus in these weeks leading to Christmas. There is no better time than Advent to gather with family and friends to talk about Jesus. Include children in the discussion by reading books about the Christmas story, sing Christmas songs together, read the Christmas story from the Bible, and share in prayer.

- \* Sing ELW hymn #289: "Angels We Have Heard On High"
- \* Read scripture: Luke 2:8-14
- \* Children's Prayer: Dear God, give us the same sense of joy and excitement as the angels who proclaimed Jesus' birth. Amen.
- \* Adult Prayer: Almighty God, when our hearts are distracted by the busy-ness of this Christmas season, enamor us with the glory and joy of your presence. Let us understand why the birth of Jesus was "good news of great joy". Amen.

When Jesus was born, the heavens broke wide open and an army of angels sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those whom He favors!". In announcing Jesus' birth, the angels were bringing

"good news of great joy for all the people". Traditionally, the church uses the season of Advent to celebrate that "good news of great joy".

God spares no expense at the announcement of Jesus' birth. He enlists not just a heavenly quartet, or a single shimmering soloist, but a gospel choir! The angels' message is simple and straightforward, and not in the least bit clouded in celestial language or heavenly rhetoric. "Good News!" "The Savior is Born!" with a chorus of "Glory to God" and "Peace on Earth".

When the heavens start singing, we'd better pay attention...! May you know the blessings of Jesus this Advent season and for years to come.



Hymn History "Away in a Manger" ELW #277, ELW #278

And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7

This hymn is commonly referred to as "Luther's Cradle Hymn". But did the great German Reformer, Martin Luther, really write the words? Did he sing them by the cradle of his little son, Hans? This is the great mystery in hymnology. "Away in a Manger" first appeared in a songbook compiled by James R. Murray in 1887, entitled Dainty Songs for Little Lads and Lasses, published in Cincinnati by John Church Company. A notation beneath the song title in the book read, "Composed by Martin Luther for his children and still sung by German mothers to their little ones." "Away in a Manger" quickly became America's favorite children's carol, the words being sung to forty-one different tunes! Everyone assumed the poem was written by Martin Luther.

In 1945, Richard Hill published an article entitled, "Not So Far Away in the Manger", in which he announced he had discovered the first two stanzas of "Away in a Manger" in an 1885 songbook entitled Little Children's Book, published by German Lutherans in Pennsylvania. No author was listed. After extensive research, Hill could not find any appearance of this carol in German history or in Luther's works. He concluded: "It seems essential to lay aside once and for all the legend that Luther wrote a carol for his children, which no one else knew anything about, until it turned up 400 years later in Philadelphia. Luther can well afford to spare the honor." He adds, "Although Luther had nothing to do with the carol, the colonies of German Lutherans in Pennsylvania most certainly did."

So the mystery endures. Who wrote "Away in a Manger"? Well, who cares?!? Certainly not the generations of children around the world who have come to learn and love this sweet carol as their first Christmas hymn. It will most likely remain - ANONYMOUS.



# SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES, LECTIONARY, & PARTICIPANTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>8:15 a.m.</u>	<u>10:45 a.m.</u>	<u>Special Events</u>
<b>12/4</b>	WOV Setting #5 WOV Ensemble, Chancel Choir	Contemporary Praise Band, Gather Choir	<b>Communion (intinction) at both services</b>
<b>12/11</b>	<b>Advent/Christmas Music Program</b> Chancel & Gather Choirs, Bethlehem Octet, Bethlehem Gospbells, Junior Gospbells, WOV String Quartet	<b>Advent/Christmas Music Program</b> Chancel & Gather Choirs, Bethlehem Octet, Bethlehem Gospbells, Junior Gospbells, WOV String Quartet	<b>Communion (at altar rail) at 8:15 service only</b>
<b>12/18</b>	ELW Setting #3 Vocal duet by new members Kristin Johnson & Janelle Lafrentz	LIGHT Christmas Program	<b>Communion (at altar rail) at 8:15 service only</b>
<b>12/25</b>	<b><u>ONE SERVICE AT 9:45 a.m.</u></b> Lessons and Carols	--	<b>Christmas Day</b> (see page 12 for details about Christmas Eve/Day services)

## LECTIONARY FOR DECEMBER

<u>Date</u>	<u>First Reading</u>	<u>Psalm</u>	<u>Second Reading</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
<b>12/4</b>	Isaiah 40:1-11	85:1-2, 8-13	2 Peter 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8
<b>12/11</b>	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11	126	I Thessalonians 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28
<b>12/18</b>	2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	89:1-4, 19-26	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38
<b>12/25</b>	Isaiah 62:6-12	97	Titus 3:4-7	Luke 2:1-20

## SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS FOR DECEMBER

DATE    TIME    READER    USHER    COMMUNION ASSISTANTS    GREETERS    COMM. SET-UP    COFFEE

<b>12/4</b>	<b>8:15 a.m.</b>	Karen Sandersfeld	8	Melissa Matthies	Frank Larsen	Linda Engstrom	Jim Erdman	Kevin & Holly Nevills	Tom & Betty Sanger	Bruce & Sandra Abild
<b>12/4</b>	<b>10:45 a.m.</b>	Melissa Matthies	2	Brenda Boyer	Wally Boyer	Barb Girtz	Kathryn Hanson	The Benzie & Gunnar Boettcher		
<b>12/11</b>	<b>8:15 a.m.</b>	John Crosswell	3	Roger Saman	Karen Sandersfeld	Brad Groth	Betty Groth	David & Shirley Ruby	Eunice & Florence Sassenberg	Jack & Pat Bengtson
<b>12/11</b>	<b>10:45 a.m.</b>	Jack Halvorson	4					Wayne & Gail Date		
<b>12/18</b>	<b>8:15 a.m.</b>	Kathy Crosswell	5	Chuck Piehl	Lorraine Carpenter	Lowell Carpenter	Jim Erdman	Roger & Dee Saman	Bob & Ginger Erlandson	Kevin & Holly Nevills
<b>12/18</b>	<b>10:45 a.m.</b>		6					Denny & Shirley Ferris		
<b>Saturday 12/24</b>	<b>4:00 p.m.</b>	Kathy Yale	7	Melissa Matthies	Sally Burdick	Sandy Kuper	Frank Larsen	Duane & Janice Ahlness	Tom & Betty Sanger	
<b>Saturday 12/24</b>	<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	Mary Bliesmer	8	Jim Nagel	Jerry Orness	Marge Orness	Etta Poole	John & Kathy Crosswell	Lavon & Sally Burdick	
<b>12/25</b>	<b>9:45 a.m.</b>	Carolyn Hovick	1	Lori Ruthenbeck	Jim Erdman	Linda Engstrom	Karla Van Lith	Randy & Rachel Wood	Brad & Betty Groth	



**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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*Join us for  
Christmas Eve and  
Christmas Day  
Worship!*



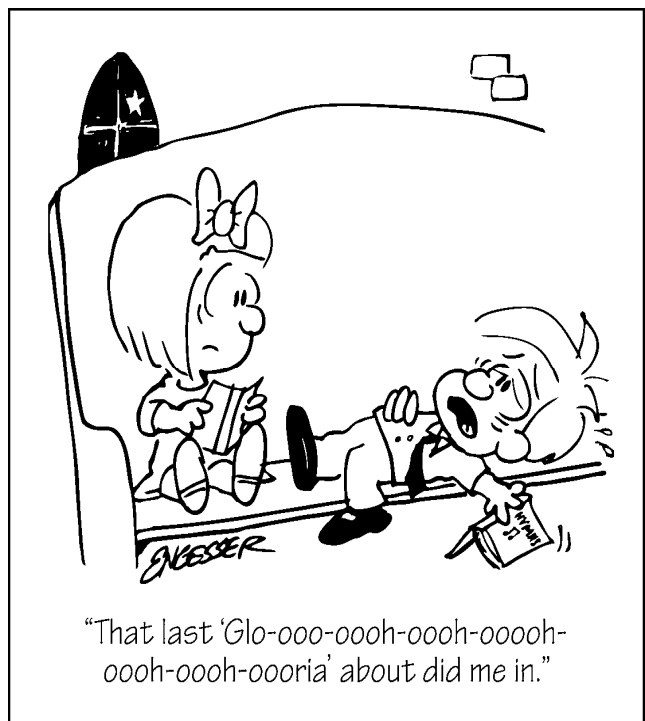
*Christmas  
Worship  
Schedule*



*December 24  
at 4 p.m. ~  
Gospbells &  
Combined Choirs*

*December 24  
at 7 p.m. ~  
Candlelight Service*

*December 25  
at 9:45 a.m. ~  
Lessons & Carols*



12

"That last 'Glo-ooo-oooh-oooh-oooh-oooh-oooh-oooh-oooria' about did me in."