

The Gift

A Christian Publication
by St. John Lutheran
www.stjohnmassbach.org
December 2007

Advent

As Thanksgiving recedes into memory, and our thoughts invariably turn to Christmas, let's not forget about Advent. Appropriately enough, Advent is a season of waiting. It is the first season of the church year and the year starts out with the anticipation of the nativity.

As we get caught up in the anticipation of Christmas morning, as we get caught up in the hustle and bustle of all the preparations that need to be made - the gifts that need to be purchased, the food that needs to be made, the cards that need to be sent, the gifts that need to be wrapped, the decorating that needs to be done, the pictures that need to be taken, the cookies that NEED to be eaten, the snowballs that need to be thrown - let's not forget to wait and to anticipate what it is that all of this preparation is for.

As easy as it might be, as much as it might seem that way, and as much as we might want it to be, we are not going through all of this anticipation and all of this preparation in order to wait for a pile of gifts to arrive on Christmas morning. But that is no surprise. We don't even go through all of this so that children can have a delightful holiday, though we hope that they do indeed have a delightful holiday. We don't even go

through all of this trouble so that distant and immediate family members can be reunited, though it is delightful when that happens as well.

Instead, as odd as it seems, we go through this period of anxious anticipation, of flurried preparation, and sometimes seemingly endless waiting (in the checkout line), in order to honor, remember, and celebrate the birth of the boy king, the one who is simultaneously both completely God and completely human, the one who would grow up to save the world through his death and resurrection. We do all of this in order to celebrate the coming of Jesus, the Christ.

It is my hope, my brothers and sisters in Christ, that you will take some time out of your busy schedules to come and wait with us this Advent Season.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Andersen

Praise and Thanksgiving

Dear St. John Lutheran Church:

“Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.” ELCA Mission Statement

With gratitude I share this word of thanks to you for your recent gift and for your support of the ministries of the ELCA (Special Needs Retirement Endowment Fund).

I am thankful for your generosity and what it makes possible in the lives of others. It is moving to witness the difference that endowment gifts like yours make in the world as the ELCA works to spread the Gospel, build and nurture the faith lives of others, reach out to the unchurched, provide educational opportunities and much more. Like your gift, the ELCA’s commitment to these ministries is a long-term investment in future generations.

I pray that you will find great joy in knowing what your gift makes possible in the lives of others today, and in the future. Blessings to you for your generosity and witness. Through partners like you we are making a difference in the world and making Christ known.

Living in God’s Amazing Grace,
Cynthia Halverson, President
ELCA Foundation

Dear Pastor Steve, Sandy and St. John’s congregation,

More Thanks!

It was an honor to be with you good people for your 150th Anniversary. The worship was meaningful for me as I so enjoy watching folks raising voices in song and what a marvelous “raising” and praising you do at St. John’s! Awesome music was coming from the choir loft also!! What a blessing. Thanks for giving me your 150th Anniversary cookbook - what a thoughtful memento of our day together. We’re thankful to be partners in ministry with you!

Bishop and Polly Wollersheim

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Rev. Andersen,

As we give thanks this holiday season, please know you are in our prayers. You are a blessing to the community churches and the ministries.

A special thank you for your donations of food, items, money and time which made this year’s Vacation Bible School the best yet.

Blessings to you now and always,
The Elizabeth Community Churches
Vacation Bible School Committee

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A big thank you for the nice donation for our Elizabeth Food Basket pantry.

Sincerely,
Janette Graves

I wish to thank everyone for their e-mails, cards, phone calls and visits during my recent hospital stay and recovery at home. Thank you all very much.

Meredith Townsend

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Dear Friends at St. John's,

Thank you so much for your prayers, notes of encouragement, and beautiful quilts given by you following our recent accident.

We praise God for His hand of protection and His family of Christians that sent prayers on our behalf. It's so encouraging to see a church stand faithful to Christ and fulfill His commission.

We trust we'll have occasion to visit you again in the near future. Thanks again for all you've done for us.

Jack and Jeannie Reel

Let Us Pray,

Janelle Williams family, Robert Yeager family, Clyde Eden, Lucille Groezinger, Meredith Townsend, Jack Reel, Joan Beyer, Bill Duguid, Kevin Meiners, Warren Parker, Donna Wurster, Dennis Ulicny, Bailey McMannus, Jeanette Yeager, Joan Bonvillain, Florence and Raymond Steffes, Dan Koester, and the men and women serving in the world's armed forces

* Updates Appreciated *

Synod News

The Northern Illinois Synod Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) will take place Saturday, March 8, 2008 at Kishwaukee Community College in Malta, Illinois. The CRE theme is "Getting Lutherans to Read the Bible." The keynote speaker will be Dr. Ralph W. Klein, Christ Seminary-Seminex Professor of Old Testament and editor of *Currents in Theology and Mission*.

Please be sure to mark your calendars and attend!

Catch The Mailman!

Greg Klopff is anticipating a return to the United States this month following his tour of duty in Iraq. Let's welcome him home with some cards full of holiday greetings:

Spc. and Mrs. Greg Klopff
1450 George Dieter
Bldg. 18 Apt. B
El Paso, TX 79936

Check Your Christmas List

Don't forget that there are still plenty of commemorative cookbooks for sale! They would make excellent stocking stuffers!

Still Looking...

Any takers to assist in shoveling snow at the church this winter? Your help would be greatly appreciated! Please see Calvin Klopff if interested.

Fa La La...

Anyone who is interested in joining the Advent Choir is welcome to join us! We will be rehearsing every Saturday at 4:00 PM and on Sundays right after church, until the Christmas Eve service when we will present our offering in song. You can come whichever time works for you, or both if you would like. Music can be picked up from Sandy Andersen and there will also be CDs with each part played out for you. If you aren't sure which part you would sing, call Sandy and she will meet with you to help you figure that out. Come and make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

A Christmas Carol

We will be Christmas caroling on Sunday, December 16th, starting at 1:30 PM at the Stockton Nursing Home. Travel along as we sing praises from Stockton to Massbach to Mt. Carroll to Savanna. All voices welcome!

Come Eat and Be Merry!

Join us here at the church on Sunday, December 9th at noon for our Christmas potluck. Meat, drink, and table service will be furnished. Please bring a dish to pass. A freewill offering will be taken to help support Rainbow Ridge/Andersen House in Stockton. Entertainment will be provided by Stockton's Bell Ringers. There will be giveaways for the adults and treats for the children. A sign-up sheet is in the narthex. Hope you can come!

Prepare For Christmas As You Feed The Hungry This Advent!

The Society of St. Andrew's Advent devotions and giving program, *God's Abundant Blessings*, invites us to honor Jesus this season by caring for the poor, hungry and vulnerable in our communities and nation. As part of the program, participants are asked to give a gift of their financial resources to feed the hungry here in the U.S. through the hunger-relief ministries of the Society of St. Andrew. Their Advent program, *God's Abundant Blessings*, contains daily scripture readings, short reflections and prayers designed to help us remember the abundance God has given us as we share with others in need.

The Society of St. Andrew is a Christian ministry dedicated to gleaning America's fields and feeding America's hungry. They provide healthy, nutritious produce to society's most vulnerable through innovative, cost-effective programs. If you are interested in the program, contact Sandy Andersen for the information.

Congratulations to our Recent Confirmands - Michael Carroll, Jessica Albrecht, and Ashley Randecker!

God's Blessings to All This Holiday Season!

