

Dear Friends of Trinity,

Since I didn't write a letter for the December newsletter I thought I would take this opportunity to tell you what Christmas means to me. I don't often get personal in my letters, but I thought it would be a refreshing change of pace. Christmas means many different things to different people. I might sound like just one more voice among the cacophony of voices that ring around Christmas time, but I'll take my chances.

I was never really into the commercial side of it and I never was concerned whether or not city hall had a manger scene. The so-called "War on Christmas" hasn't registered with me because Christmas means so much more to me than what any religious or secular expression can give. Religionists and secularists will continue this fight with each other year after year; both groups come out with bloody noses and bruised egos. Whatever. It's so unimportant and banal.

Christmas is very sacred to me. And like most people I can get sentimental with memories and thoughts of family, friends, snow, lights, Christmas trees, my own childhood, and everything that the season can offer. But when I read the Biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus I'm struck by many things that transport my mind to a completely different world and warm my soul in ways that informs how I celebrate.

Everything about the birth narratives speaks to me of humility and reminds me of what an egotistical fool I can be a lot of times. While the giants in power are running around trying to save their own hides, stamping each other out, and struggling to makes sense of events, God is acting under their radar welcoming and embracing the meek and the lowly. That's where He does His best work. I then start to ponder what God might be doing under my radar, knowing that what He's doing is being done quietly and unassumingly. God is constantly giving birth to a new world... and I miss it because I'm too focused on myself and my petty little problems. This saddens me and forces me to examine the ways in which I participate in inflicting pain and grief on the world and on myself. From this vantage point I can more clearly see God calling me out of that morass and inviting me to be a co-creator of His new world with Him, following Jesus all the way. It frightens me and enthralls me at the same time. This is a good thing.

In any case it is still God's work, not mine. God sent *His* Son. God gives *His* Spirit. Everyone in the accounts of the birth of Jesus went to see *Jesus*. The Spirit of Jesus is the gatherer, and I am summoned to witness such humility and then look for it in the everyday world I encounter, and then join in. That is what makes my celebration of Christmas merry.

Plastic manger scenes and saying "Merry Christmas" just for the sake of saying it or making a point just doesn't cut it for me. Reflecting on the wonder and the joy of the sacred birth in Bethlehem and then acting on it is more my speed!

Have a very Merry and Blessed Christmas and a Joyous New Year!

Pastor Hoag

JANUARY 2012

Overwhelmed!!!!

As I sit here on the morning of 12/22 writing this, we have delivered 154 mugs to MorningStar; I have another 35 loaded in my car; 4 remain on the table, and more are expected today. For those without a calculator nearby; that's 193! I have deposited over \$450 in change to the bank and judging from the looks of it, will deposit another \$200 or so tomorrow. That's just in CHANGE. The donations made in the envelopes have also been exceedingly generous and I suspect we will meet or exceed our \$2,000.00 goal. When I was given the wonderful opportunity to deliver this small gift of mugs I learned that \$2.05 buys a meal. That literally is often **change** from a purchase. Thank you for opening your hearts in such a dramatic way.

JANUARY CHANCEL

12/31/1/1 Lois Dobbs & Sharon MacFarlane
1/7-8 Kay Purnell & Debbie Nick
14/15 Debbie Nick & Denise Buchanan
21/22 Denise Buchanan & Jan Falk
28/29 Jan Falk & Sally Jackson

Our next meeting is Monday, **January 9th** at 6:30 p.m. Hostesses are Deb Nick and Sally Jackson.

Thank you to the following people that donated the poinsettia plants which adorned the altar during the Christmas Services: Anonymous, The Alfano family in memory of Clyde and Chris Huntington, Duncan and Allene Bachmann, Bob and Kim Blecke, The Borellis, Bob and Denise Buchanan, Janet DeForest, Les and Ginny DeCarlo, Bob and Tammy Doerrler & family, Betty Dunn and Ed and Judy VanderVeen, Betty Hopkinson in memory of Gilbert, The Kauns, Paul and Robin Krol, Al McCullough, Cindy McCullough, Steve Spiess, Jeremy and Jennifer Paul, Chuck and Sandy Peters, Kay and Gary Purnell, Rich and Jackie Rohner, Bob and Ann Romadka, Bill and Jeri Sandt, Doug and Jan Schlak, Tinker Family, Rex and Jan Toepke, Bill and Shirley Walter, The Wheeler Family, Daniel and Susan Willenborg.

The 2012 Flower Chart is now up in the hallway across from the church office with many opportunities for you to place flowers on the altar if you wish. Just complete the order form found near the flower chart and return to the office. For more information, please contact Denise Buchanan at 815-485-2729. The cost has gone up; please make a note of it.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The Annual Cookie Walk, our only fundraiser, was a huge success. A BIG thank you to all the workers, bakers and buyers! Thanks, also, Confirmation Class for setting up the tables.

Our next meeting will be **January 31st** at 12:30 P.M. Installation of officers will take place, and program is TBD. Watch the bulletin for more details. Hostesses are Ginny DeCarlo and Jan Schlak.

Annual Congregation Meeting

This open meeting will be held on Sunday, **January 29th** immediately following the 10:30 a.m. worship service. All members are invited to attend. There will be coffee and snacks to enjoy. The 2012 Budget will be presented as well as highlights and recaps from the various organizations for 2011.

ACOLOYTE SCHEDULE

January 1 10:30 am Anthony Myers/Hannah Handorf
January 8 8:00 am Taylor Sass/
Jackson Remm
January 15 10:30 am Derek Delcorio/
Drew Cuthbert
January 22 8:00 am Elena Gerk/
Cody Harbin

+ CROSS BEARER + SCHEDULE

January 1 10:30 am Angelina Condit
January 8 8:00 am Hannah Sass
January 15 10:30 am Brenden Delcorio
January 22 8:00 am Mark Lorenz

CALLING ALL YOUTH

(4th Grade thru High School)

You did such a great job helping with the decorating of the Christmas tree in the sanctuary, we would like to invite you back to “undecorate” the tree.

Please come help us on Sunday, January 8th at 2:00 pm. If you have questions, contact Michelle Hoag at (815) 723-7642 or talk to Pastor.

SCRIPTURE READERS

We are asking you to become involved in our worship services, without committing too much time! Just read The First and Second Lessons!! To do so, place your name on the Sunday you would like on the sheets in the hallway. The actual readings can be found by contacting Pastor or Kim at (815) 485-6973.

GREETERS

We come as friends, a family of believers, greeting one another with a warm welcome, thankful for the gifts of a community in which we can live out our relationship with God through our relationships with one another. There are sign-up sheets located on a table near the gym if you would like to extend a warm welcome to your fellow members and visitors.

TPCG

The next meeting of this group is Friday, **January 13th**, from 5-11 p.m. in the church gym. All are welcome. Please bring any portable crafts you would like to work on and 2\$ and a snack to share. And as always, bring other projects you would like to complete. We hope to see you there. Please call or e-mail Kim with questions. (708) 478-5627 or KimHuntingtonAlfano@comcast.net

TRINITY PRAYER CHAIN

Trinity Lutheran has a Prayer Chain that is available to anyone for prayer support by fellow members. These prayers may be for personal, congregational, community, governmental, and all other needs. All requests are kept confidential. Please call Ginny DeCarlo (815) 485-2001 to request a prayer. The Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16b.

If you are interested in being part of the Prayer Chain, or would like more information please give Ginny a call. You can also call the office at (815) 485-6973). We would be happy to provide you with all the information. Please consider being part of this worthwhile endeavor. You can make a difference.

2012 Offering Envelopes boxes are in the hallway by the flower chart. Please pick yours up to save the church the expense of mailing it!

On a separate, but related matter: our financial secretary, Janice Prospero does a WONDERFUL job of keeping tabs of all donations. For tax purposes, please be aware, however, that she can only record contributions made by envelope to designated groups, such as LCCF, debt, Sunday School. All other monies DO need to be given to Trinity with the designation in the memo line. Thank you for your understanding in this matter!

MorningStar Serving Dates

WooHoo! We have our serving dates for all of 2012! You may go ahead and mark your calendar now for every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month at 3:45 pm. Yes, beginning **1/2/2012**. That does include Labor Day. Please contact Judy Wilmsen with any questions. 815 462 1374.

Preschool Registration

Preschool Registration is underway for members of Trinity Lutheran Church. It opens for students who are already enrolled in the program on 1/1, and to the general public in the third week of January. Tuition is \$95 for two day students and \$120 for 3 day students (per month). Children must be 3 by September 1 2012. For further information, please call 815 485 6973.

Prechool Board meeting for January is **1/23** at 7 pm.

New Year, New Things...

There will be some changes with the new year. The newsletter will now only be mailed to those who request it (as of this date, no one has); and to shut-ins. It will also be available on-line – which is also where more up-to-date information is always available. The website is www.trintynewlenox.org As the website continues to grow and evolve, we hope you will enjoy it. We have already gained some new faces here because of the website.

The Saturday worship service, Expressions, will continue to be a part of our offering of services – it is indeed a wonderful alternative if your schedule doesn't permit Sunday morning worship. Honest, it is still LUTHERAN worship. Perhaps a resolution can be to TRY one service.

Speaking of resolutions: how about being a reader or a greeter or an usher for one service? Or, really step outside the box and go to MorningStar. Your life may never be the same.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved in your church family. Pick one this year and try it. You'll be glad you did. You may meet a new best friend.

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

In order to accommodate all the groups' resumed meeting schedule, the Feb newsletter deadline will be **1/20**. The newsletter itself will not be available until **1/29**.

Thank You, Thank you, Thank You

Christmas services require the work of a lot of people. Some get their names in the bulletin. Many do not. We could try and list them, but inevitably, we would miss someone. So, whether you came and helped set up the tree, folded bulletins, swapped out candles (you did notice, didn't you?), ushered, set up Communion, cleaned up after Communion, set up flowers, donated flowers, played an instrument, sang, donated change, donated mugs, etc. a very warm and heartfelt THANK YOU! May the love that you showed be reflected back to you a thousand times over in the year to come.

BIRTHDAYS

Betty Dunn	1
Karl Backhus	2
Dale Bormet	2
Noreen Bormet	3
Brittany McElmury	3
Ashley Renwick	3
Cody Harbin	4
Erik Johnson	5
Christine Bormet	6
Samantha Buell	6
Jeffery Niemann	6
Bud Sherman	7
Jack Dobbs	8
Patricia Porter	8
Duncan Bachmann	9
Debra Look	9
Ben Toepke	10
Ryan Jennings	11
Kyle Pigney	11
Rex Toepke	11
Will Lyman	12
Alexandra Sutton	12
Ean Schultz	13
Madeline Baxa	14
Hunter Valentine	14
Terry Anzalone	15
Donna Brunmeier	15
Valerie Zielinski	18
Jeri Sandt	19
Lucy Hartley	20
Kim Huntington-Alfano	20
Saanvi Ray Purnell	20
Jane Schrank	20
Samantha Sutton	20
Cynthia Fandl	21

Ernie Falk	22
Tessa Valentine	22
Devin Conne	23
Cameron Lerner	23
Andrea Valentine	24
Rachel Fox	25
John McClaughry	25
Nancy Minnick	25
Deborah Koehler	26
Thomas Ritter	26
Reese Rourke	26
Kyle Conrad	27
George Opiola	27
Samantha Pecoraro	27
Jacklyn Thompson	27
Adam Varju	27
Tim McCure	28
Madison Kosel	29
Debbi Hodo	30
Rebecca Aiken	31
Mark Lorenz	31
Brandon McCure	31
Lindsey Woodcock	31

ANNIVERSARIES

Mike and Sue Kunce	20
Craig and Nicole Black	22