



The Visitor

from
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Over 150 years of Ministry

JANUARY 2012

WWW.STPAULSLUTHERAN.NET

2012 Offering Envelopes

Now that 2012 is here, you are reminded to discard your old envelopes and use the new package. If you still have not picked up your new envelopes, you will find them in the school cafeteria in alphabetical order.

Here are some ways you can help expedite the work of the volunteers who are on the counting board:

1. Please put your offering in the envelope supplied to you by the church. All donations need to be in an envelope numbered with your account to be correctly credited. If you place a check in the offering plate without an envelope, the volunteer counter will then have to make a new envelope on which they then place your number and amount given.
2. Please put the dollar amount on the envelope. A volunteer must write the dollar amount on all envelopes that do not have one. If you wish that no one see how much you give, you can place the envelope upside down in the collection plate.

Voters' Assembly Meeting

A regular meeting of the Voters' Assembly will be held on **Sunday, January 22, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. at the downtown church.**

Members of the congregation who are age 18 or older are eligible to become voting members and to participate in the decision making of the congregation. After attending at least two Voters' Assembly meetings in a one-year time period, a member is accepted into voting membership. Voting membership privileges then continue as long as you remain a member of the congregation.

Sunday School

There will be no Children's Sunday School on January 3, 2012. Children's Sunday School will resume on January 9, 2012.

2012 Flower Chart

The Flower Chart for 2012 is up. Please pay Ladies Aid \$20.00 for one vase or \$40.00 for two. The chart will be posted downtown at the church during January and then will be moved out to the school for posting.

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School Calendar	Purple
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Church Office Hours

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday



"We Care Because Christ Cared"

Monthly Statistics

November Membership Statistics

Baptized	1693
Communicant	1305
Communing	767

Attendance

Avg. Wkend Worship:

November	504
Year-to-date	476
Ladies Aid	N/A
Ladies Bkfst	7
Men's Bkfst	14
Seniors	N/A
Singles	N/A
Tabca	11
Women's Bkfst	N/A

Please Recycle...We Need Your Help!!

St. Paul's is again participating in the S.C.O.R.E. Recycling Contest through Belson's Steel, Rt. 50 & Larry Power Road, Bourbonnais. The contest ends April 2012 but need your help now to reach our goal. Why not consider recycling during all the holidays and parties? By doing so, you are not only teaching valuable skills to tomorrow's adults, but you are earning cash and prizes for St. Paul's School. Here's what you need to do...

- 1) Collect your aluminum cans and bring them to Belson's. You get paid cash for your cans. If you are unable to take the cans to Belson's we do have a collection canister located at the school.
- 2) Mention "St. Paul's" when you get paid. Belson's will add one point to our score for every pound of cans that you are recycling.
- 3) At the end of the contest, our school gets two cents for every point. PLUS, the top schools will win thousands in extra cash and prizes. Last year the winning schools received over \$15,000 in cash and prizes!

For questions, contact the school office at 815-932-0312.

Please help us out...RECYCLE...and SCORE with us!!

Happy Birthday

.... to our members (age 60 or older) celebrating birthdays this month.

January

- 01 Rosemary Brockman, Idella Brooks, Carolyn Gebhardt, Douglas Mann, Patricia Sanders
- 03 Alvin Gerberding, Fred Langelett, Dennis Rabe
- 04 Lyn Grandt
- 07 Lucille Hendricks, Lois Holtman, Rick Longtin Sr.
- 08 Eileen Biesendorfer, Ronald Lemenager, Pam Roberts
- 10 Wendell Beckman
- 12 Clarence Bretzman, James Trudeau
- 13 Eldon Balgeman, Kathleen Gradberg, Sue Sykes
- 14 Dave Lahners, Earl McIntosh
- 16 Verne High
- 17 Myron Booi
- 19 Robert Bohlmann, Thomas Nelson
- 20 Stephen Freitag
- 21 William Gall Sr., William Odette Sr.
- 22 Alice Buss, Lillian Wischnowski
- 24 Dianne Payne
- 25 Linda Freitag, Edna Yarno
- 26 Rick Einfeldt
- 27 Kathleen Goers
- 29 Norman Kent
- 30 Anita Schluter-Wilson
- 31 Janice Nietfeldt

Next Newsletter Deadline

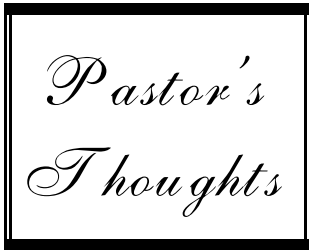
Sunday, January 15, 2012

for publication in the

February 2012 Newsletter



Newsletter Deadline = 15th of each month
Bulletin Deadline = Tuesday, 1:30 p.m.



It's time to start thinking about 2012.

When you read this, Christmas Day will have passed and all the gifts have most likely been opened.

- Some of the gifts may already be in the - return pile.
- Some gifts may already have broken.
- Some gifts might have lost their novelty and
- Still other gifts may never have been wanted in the first place.

But what about the greatest gift of all - God the Father's gift to you of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ? Where does Jesus fall in your list of gifts?

If you are taking the time to read this newsletter, I'm assuming you don't want to return Jesus!

I can confidently tell you that this gift is not broken. But what does the gift of Jesus mean for you in 2012? While some like to reflect on Jesus only a couple times of year like on Christmas and Easter; the children of God who love the Lord refuse to only let Jesus be a part of their lives every once and awhile. After all, He is the gift that is meant to be opened every single day. Each time we open up this gift He becomes more meaningful and significant to us.

So here are a few ideas for you that can make the greatest gift of Christmas something that really does change you and give you joy and peace all year long.

- **Spend time with Jesus daily.**

Find a daily reading plan that works for you and commit to hearing God speak His words of love, forgiveness and guidance every day. Nothing has helped me grow more in my faith than daily devotional reading of God's Word. Whether you use "Portals of Prayer" or have the "Lutheran Hour Ministry" daily devotion sent to your inbox by email - - - God's Word is rich and can touch your life! It is so simple, so easy and gives so much to those who humble themselves and choose to listen to the Lord each day.

- **Get involved in a Bible Study group.**

Tremendous insight is given when God's people study the Word together. There is time on Sunday mornings and many small groups meet in homes to study God's Word. We learn from each other as God's Spirit gives us wisdom and insight into His Word, His Will and His Ways.

- **Worship God weekly with your brothers and sisters in Christ.**

God once said - It is not good for man to be alone. That is still true. We were meant to be together and share in community. We are called not to forsake the gathering together as some are in the habit of doing, but to come together regularly to support and encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25) Join us in worship as we hear God's Word and respond in prayer and praise to our Great God and Savior!

- **Plan not just on receiving, but get involved in a ministry where you can serve others even as you have been served by our Lord Jesus.**

Contrary to the mindset of many, the universe doesn't revolve around - - - me. I grow and experience life more abundantly when I give of myself as a thank offering to the Lord Jesus.

Yes Christmas may be over, but the significance and meaning of Christmas is not. The Father's gift to us is not meant to be returned or put on a shelf for a later time. Jesus is meant to be enjoyed. He is meant to be shared. He is meant to give light to those who walk in darkness and life to those who live in the land of the valley of the shadow of death.

In short, Jesus is meant to change all our todays and tomorrows.

Have a blessed 2012 as you enjoy the transforming gift of Jesus Christ!

Blessings in the name of the PRINCE OF PEACE!!!

Pastor Koeppen

"We Care Because Christ Cared"

*From the
Pen of the
Pastor*

***“The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God
for all the things they had heard and seen,” Luke 2:20***

Christmas is over and we have probably already put the decorations back in the box. Then the worst thing happened, we had to go back to work. For the kids, they will start to think very soon about going back to school, whether it is college, high school or grade school. I wonder how many of us will go back rejoicing? My guess is that many face this with dread. That is what makes the last verse of the Christmas story so amazing. The shepherds did not return to their work with dread. That is what the word return is referring to, going back to work. They are the ones with the tough jobs. These shepherds are away from home. They are snubbed by society for the job they have to do, being a lowly shepherd. It is not a glamour job but looked upon as a job for the lowest of the low of their day. It was not for an 8 hour day on the clock, but for 24 hours a day until it was time to move to another location to find pasture land for the sheep they watched over.

Yet, they rejoiced in returning to this job. Why is that the case for them? They did not even have a party to remember, or a present to carry away from under the tree. Why were they so different? Don't you wish you had the joy they did when you went back to work or school? It was because they had celebrated Christmas and were still celebrating it, the Christmas of God.

These shepherds were caught in a world of darkness and sin. For them days were gloomy, but the message of the angels changed all that. *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the LORD.”* This is not a one day event. This is the news that the Savior was here and He was not going away. This Savior was not just anyone. This was and continues to be the LORD, the God of heaven and earth. God had bridged the gap between our sin and His holiness. He had entered into our world where we were at in all our lowliness. He did not come to judge us, but to save us in His mercy and grace. He came to live with us, not in a way that we would be terrified of Him. He came as a little baby so we would pick Him up, touch Him, talk to Him, smile with Him, and follow Him. He came to be with us where we were at.

How can that not bring joy to our hearts? He does not come to leave us where we were. He comes to overcome the sin that entrapped us so we could serve Him in joy and without fear. He came to love us so we could serve Him in the joy of love. He came so that what we did in His name was of lasting value and would change things in the lives of others. He came to save us so we could enjoy life in its fullness as we experienced peace with God to have access to all His blessings in this life and the next. They were so touched they wanted to tell everyone this good news, whoever would listen. For them each day was an adventure of living another day in the presence of their God, Savior and friend.

Our Christmas still goes on. Christ is Immanuel, God with us. He is with us just as He was with the Shepherds. Are we not baptized whereby Christ promised, *“I am with you always to the end of the age?”* Do we not hold this Christ who comes to us in such humble way, in the bread and in the wine with His body and blood? Do we not hear the gentle voice of Jesus as they did with that baby in the manger through the good news of His Word that He speaks to us each time we either hear or read His Word? Do we not meet this Jesus as our Savior who comes to save us and bring the very blessings of eternity into our lives today as we too can rejoice that we have peace with God? We too can return to face each new day whether at work or in school with the same joy that filled the shepherds who used each new day and opportunity to praise God. For the season of Christmas is with us. The joy of our Christmas never ends, not even when we put the Christmas tree back in the box. Merry Christmas today and always.

In Christ, Pastor Sheets



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Executive Director's Corner

When I was a young boy, I attended Brick Elementary school in Beardstown, IL, a small school where all the farm kids went, which, of course, was really a brick building. I think back on those days and I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. Whenever Brick School alumni get together, the discussion always turns to the awesome cafeteria food. Everything was homemade, including the biggest, stickiest cinnamon rolls you can imagine that were always served with their amazing chili. All the town kids were so jealous!

Our teachers taught us some serious manners too. We had to stand at our seat to wait for everyone to get to the table. After everyone arrived, we all said a prayer together and then we sat down to eat. When you got to the 4th grade, the boys had to push the girls' chairs in after the prayer. You had to eat everything on your plate before you could get seconds or you had to at least try everything before you could go out for recess. The lunch lady, Mrs. Wherley, would come over to your seat and watch you sample whatever was left on your plate. If you were smart, you'd keep just enough milk in your carton to help wash down whatever it was you didn't like so you could get outside for a mean game of Tether Ball.

You may find this hard to believe, but back then, I was figuring out ways to "beat the system" and it came in very handy on lima bean days. Just the thought of lima beans makes me sick! I had developed a fool proof way of disposing of these awful things and still get to the seconds line. I would put a bean in my mouth and craftily spit it into my milk carton. After many repetitions, I had gotten rid of these wretched things and enjoyed a trip back to the lunch line for the good stuff. Life was good and I was home free. For the moment anyway...

Footloose and fancy free, I'm on the playground enjoying some quality time with my friends, when I hear "Billy, could you come here for a moment?" I casually trot over to Mrs. Wherley as she coaxed me over with that long, bony finger. This is where the other shoe drops. "If I ever see you spitting your lima beans in your milk carton again, I'll make you eat the entire can." And these were the big, institutional sized cans! I believe I just got a

Do-Over from Mrs. Wherley and she's not known going easy on people.

It's a new year and we get a Do-Over. We spend a lot of time at the beginning of each New Year looking back on the old year to figure out how to make this year better. The good thing about Do-Overs is that God gives us a Do-Over every day. All we have to do is ask Him and the slate is clean. No matter how bad we think we are, He always can find the good in us and forgives us.

So, Happy New Year!! May your 2012 be a blessed year. Enjoy your Do-Over and be thankful that God doesn't serve lima beans.

Blessings,
Bill Dyche, Executive Director

A Resolution For The New Year

Let us resolve:

First, to attain the grace of silence;

Second, to deem all fault-finding that does no good a sin;

Third, to practice the grace and virtue of praise.

– *Harriet Beecher Stowe*

Resolutions For Avoiding Misery

Choose to love - rather than hate

Choose to smile - rather than frown

Choose to build - rather than destroy

Choose to persevere - rather than quit

Choose to praise - rather than gossip

Choose to heal - rather than wound

Choose to give - rather than take

Choose to act - rather than delay

Choose to forgive - rather than curse

Choose to pray - rather than despair

– *Author unknown*



"We Care Because Christ Cared"

Stewardship Program Report

The stewardship program conducted in Sept. & October brought the following financial and program results:

- 186 pledges to the General Fund for a total of \$557,765.
- Anticipated Weekly Income will be \$10,726.25.
- Interested in Estate Planning 19
- Interested in Home Bible Study 13

St. Paul's has more than 186 giving units and our weekly income will be more than the anticipated amount because we have faithful members who donate, but choose not to pledge. Members who pledged are reminded that if your financial situation changes, you do not have to report it to anyone. Your commitment is your pledge between you and the Lord.

The stewardship program also resulted in a number of new volunteers for the use of their time and talents for the benefit of the church and school ministries. That information has been passed on to individuals responsible for the areas covered by the survey.

It is not too late to fill out a use of time survey, a use of talents survey, or a card with your commitment to the General Fund, which covers budgeted expenses. Those surveys and cards are available in the church office and are kept at the usher stations where bulletins are distributed at all church services. Please return them to the church office marked with "Stewardship" on the envelope.

Commitment Card Pledges & Capital Campaign Pledges

Some members have inquired about the use of donations through the pledges – most members have two pledges currently active. If you are confused, please note the following:

The most recent pledges through the stewardship program that runs from October, 2011 through September, 2012:

Regular weekly or monthly donations are used to cover the daily operating expenses of the church, school and auxiliary committees. These amounts are budgeted each year and approved by the Voter's Meeting for the fiscal

year which operates from July 1 – June 30 each calendar year. The present budget is in effect through June 30, 2012. None of the amount collected through this commitment are used to pay off the mortgage or interest.

What about my capital campaign pledge?

That amount is over and above the pledge for the general fund budget expenses. We are in the middle of the 2nd Capital Campaign that is in effect from June, 2010, through June, 2013. The amounts that you donate through the Capital Campaign envelopes are used exclusively to make payments on principal and interest for the building debt. The first campaign lasted for three years, was renewed as the second three-year campaign in the spring of 2010, and will be followed by a 3-year campaign that will start in June of 2013. No money collected for this campaign is used for budgeted expenses.



A New Year's Prayer For Peace

Dear Lord,

Let this be a year that moves us
one step closer to each other.

Let this be a year that brings us
understanding in our hearts.

Let this be a year that fills us
with a yearning, burning feeling

for peace with one another
and a oneness, Lord with You!

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Adopt-A-Student News

Dear members of St. Paul,

Happy New Year from the Schewe's in Fort Wayne, IN! We pray the joy of the incarnation of our Savior's birth is with you through this cold and dark time of the year and that the lengthening of the days reminds you that the true light has come into the world!

The funny and sometimes a little depressing thing about working Hobby Lobby is that we're getting all kinds of summer decorations put up in the store. Christmas at Hobby Lobby was full swing from September through November; now it feels like a thing of the past. I suppose that has helped me appreciate Advent more. Advent seems to keep Christmas at bay until the appointed time. And the Christmas hymns help continue the celebration two weeks beyond December 25, far longer than the "rest of the world!" I've gained a deeper fondness for Advent by working at Hobby Lobby than I ever did at the seminary! God truly works in mysterious ways...

Things have been so hectic for Sarah and I that not a whole lot has changed. She's been working a lot of extra hours at Hobby Lobby because several workers quit. Christmas time isn't a good time to try and train new cashiers or department workers. Instead, the rest of the workers had to make up for it. But we still thank God for providing the jobs and managers who are flexible with our schedule.

My classes are going alright. I haven't started on any big papers or research projects. I hope to do a lot of studying over the Christmas break (we get a 3 week break!). I am done with the placement interviews. One interview focuses on our "preferences" and the other interview focuses more on my pastoral approach. Both went very well. Now I get to wait... until May 2nd...

Our running nonsense still continues into a colder month of December. Perhaps you've wondered, "just what type of sickness compels two individuals to run every day for 28 months consecutively?" (I use that language because often times it feels like some mental sickness to me) Well, to answer the question, I can't say we've always enjoyed it. In fact, many times we dread the run. We've had to wake up at 5am before to "get our run in." But, the whole thing started from one of our cross country friends in college. This friend ran every day for 6 years, missed a few days for some injury or illness, and managed to start back at day 1, then 2, and so on. Sarah and I were both

amazed that the person started right back at it. So one day after a random run I said "That's one day of consecutive running!" Sarah laughed and rolled her eyes or something. But lo and behold, we ran the next day and it was day 2! And so it goes beyond 800 days. It has been very good for us together and we're always happy when "the run for the day is done."

That doesn't have a whole lot to do with seminary but it is certainly an odd part of our life together. I'm still amazed that we both miss the hills from New York. It was a beast to get up them but a lot of fun to run down!

We do pray that God is blessing you through the colder times. He has been gracious to us. The weather has been mild, in fact beautiful the last two days. We also pray that your Advent and Christmas and New Years celebrations have been filled with lots of joy! We can't thank you enough for the many blessings we've received from your hands! God has been gracious to us and has done wonderful things for us through you.

In Christ, Caleb and Sarah

Ten Personal Resolutions For The New Year

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful greeting.
2. Call people by name. The sweetest music is to hear one's name.
3. Be humble. Something can be learned from every living thing.
4. Be friendly. You first must be a friend to have one.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is a pleasure.
6. Be interested in others. You can like almost everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise, cautious with criticism.
8. Give your word, and then keep it.
9. Be considerate of other's feelings.
10. Be alert to give service. The greatest personal satisfaction comes from helping other people.

"We Care Because Christ Cared"

School News

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to serve as "Adopted Grandparents" at St. Paul's Lutheran School for Grandparents' Day on Friday, March 16 from 8:30am-noon. Many of our preschool through 8th grade students' grandparents are unable to attend our Grandparents' Day celebration. We would like to invite you to serve as an "Adopted Grandparent" for these students on this day! Come join in our festivities, make crafts, play games, read stories, eat snacks, and attend chapel all while learning about our students at St. Paul's! You do not need to be a grandparent to be an "Adopted Grandparent" on March 16! Please contact Laurie Hofman at (815) 932-0312 or lhofman@stpaulslutheran.net for more information or to sign up to be an "Adopted Grandparent" on March 16!

Pre-School Happenings

In Mrs. Roggendorf's Early 3, Pre-3, and Pre-4 classes we excitedly counted down the days until Christmas marking Baby Jesus' birthday. Our class had a baby doll wrapped in a blanket sleeping in a box of hay just as it would have been for Jesus. We made our own Nativity puppets so we could retell the Christmas story. While we looked forward to getting presents, we also had lots of fun painting Christmas cards and presents to give to our parents.

In other news, several months ago we read a story about a boy named Flat Stanley who was accidentally flattened. In his flattened condition he was able to travel in an envelope and have many adventures. We mailed our own Flat Stanleys to friends and relatives asking them to take pictures and tell of the adventures he had with them. As of December, we have had over 30 responses from as far away as Japan and England. We have learned many things about people and places around the world. See the display in the hallway by our classroom for a sampling of the responses we have received.

NO-SEW FLEECE SCARF



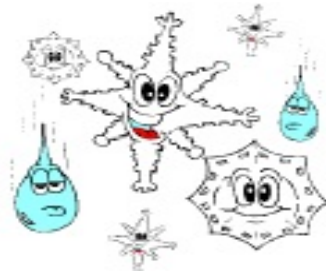
Winter is a difficult time for people in need, so make this scarf to help someone stay warm.

What you need:

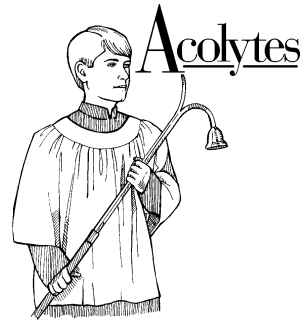
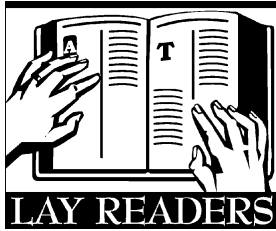
- Medium-weight polar fleece, 60" standard width (a 9" portion will make one scarf)
- Scissors
- An adult to help

What you do:

1. Cut a piece of medium-weight polar fleece to the size of 60" x 9". Cut the fabric across its width so the material is stretchy.
2. Trim off the edge binding. To add "fringe" along each end, make a 6"-long cut every half inch.
3. For curly fringe, pull each strand and then let go sharply. Another attractive option is to tie an over-hand knot at the top of each strip.
4. Donate your scarf to a local group that helps people in need. For greater impact, encourage your Sunday school classmates or other friends to make scarves, too.



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Schedule

January 1

8:30 am Dennis Rabe
11:05 am Kate Mesenbring

January 7 & 8

5:00 pm Audra Taylor
8:30 am Abbey Rogers
11:05 am Jacquie Secrest

January 14 & 15

5:00 pm Ken Ebert
8:30 am Roy Cordes
11:05 am Stacy Yoakum

January 21 & 22

5:00 pm Jennifer Richardson
8:30 am Dee Cordes
11:05 am Joann Hess

January 28 & 29

5:00 pm Dan Hendrickson
8:30 am Tammie Mesenbring
11:05 am Deb Turrell

January 1

8:30 am Tim Keown, Chance Taylor
11:05 am Nate Franklin, Jordan Ritter

January 8

8:30 am Logan Bourassa, Devin Bradford
11:05 am Stephen McCully, Courtnie Patterson

January 15

8:30 am Olivia Custer, Paul Drake
11:05 am Emma Baud, Allie Bourassa

January 22

8:30 am Jared Fancoeur, Peyton Mann
11:05 am Dylan Deatherage, Makenzie Kurtz

January 29

8:30 am Austin Piwoni, Quinton Zaragoza
11:05 am Samantha Estes, Zachariah Estes

February 5

8:30 am Emily Anderson, Kacie Lalumendier
11:05 am Makayla Morrical, Kelsey Stang

February 12

8:30 am Samantha Harre, Catelyn Marzke
11:05 am Jacob Anthony, Will Hendrickson



Nursery Schedule

January 1 - *New Year's Day - No Nursery*
Have a Very Happy New Year

January 8

9:50 am Heather Baud, Tina O'Brien
11:05 am Sharon Kerouac, Makayla Morrical

January 15

9:50 am Lori Curtis, Barb Freitag
11:05 am Kate Mesenbring, Bonnie Neufeld

January 22

9:50 am Gordon & Stacey Palmer
11:05 am Loree Yoakum, Stacy Yoakum

January 29

9:50 am Cheryl Wheeler, Joyce Witheft
11:05 am Sam Brown, Elizabeth Ostrowski

February 5

9:50 am Georgia O'Hara, MaryLu O'Hara
11:05 am Joan Gehm, Rylie Hartman

"We Care Because Christ Cared"