

The opening words of the Christmas Gospel are these: “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree...” Yes, it was a time to take a count of the people. Caesar Augustus was the Roman Emperor. Do we really need those details as we again focus on Jesus who counts more than anyone and whose rule and reign is beyond comparison? Why even bother with mention of Caesar? The importance of Caesar what that under his power there came to be established what is known as *Pax Romana*. *Pax Romana* means “the peace of Rome.” In a region that had known centuries of upheaval and conflict, there was now peace. This window of peace wouldn’t last long, but it would be long enough for Jesus to move with his message and work of salvation. It would provide the people opportunity to take in the message rather than taking on some enemy. “The peace of Rome” was critical to God’s plan for the guiding and saving work of Jesus. God used the power of Caesar Augustus to provide a more secure setting for the teaching, preaching and healing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We are blessed also to have a secure setting for our ministry in the name of Jesus. Our thanks for your partnership and support in ministry through the past year. May the blessings of God’s peace abound in your Christmas gatherings; and may the new year find us moving together in peace to live more fully into our mission statement which reads “We are believers, seeking to invite all into the caring, sharing, growing ways of Christ.”

Together, may we reflect the peace of Christ in our work and mission.

A blessed and peaceful Christmas from your staff...

Corlys

Jane

Tonya

Pastor Bob



From Lutheran Campus Ministries

Dear Friends of SMSU Lutheran Campus Ministries,

*I am so excited to be working on campus! I am still trying to find my way around and to get to know people, but it is exciting to be a part of something with such great history! I will be working hard to figure out how to meet the needs of the ministry and find my place in all of it. As I begin I invite you to drop by the Campus Religious Center on Dec. 2 for a cup of coffee or hot apple cider and some Christmas goodies. The Lutheran Campus Ministry Board encourages your attendance and I look forward to meeting new faces! The open house will be from 2-7 p.m.
May God fill you with Peace!
Juanita Harberts*



Thrivent Choice

In 2009 alone, Thrivent Financial provided \$113 million to help congregations, communities and nonprofit organizations. Giving back makes an important impact in people's lives. Members who own Thrivent Financial products help make this support possible.

Thrivent Choice lets you help choose where some of Thrivent Financial's charitable outreach funds go by directing Choice Dollars SM and by participating in Voting Events. As an eligible Thrivent member, you could consider making the choice for Choice Dollars for First Lutheran. You can do this on-line, via the 1-800 number. You do need to set up an account to do this on-line. If you would send their Choice Dollars to First Lutheran, the church should acquire quite a few free dollars.

(Use your MyThrivent user ID and password to log in and get started. If you aren't signed up yet, register now to participate in Choice DollarsSM and Voting Events.)

Social Ministries December News

During the Advent season, we support our missionaries in Tibet by buying angel tree ornaments for a suggested donation of \$25. You will find one of our Social Ministries members ready to help you as we sit by the **Angel Tree** in the Narthex before or after services. If you choose to purchase your angel through the regular worship offering, please designate the amount and write “Angel Tree” on your offering envelope so that we can place an angel on the tree for you.



The **Food Shelf** theme is “Holiday Foods” month. We know that many people have to choose between buying food and paying the heat bill once the cold weather starts. Please add to our grocery cart during this month to help our neighbors in need.

Our **Essentials Tree** gifts will be sent to Parkside and Westside schools for elementary children who need them. Some of the items needed include mittens or gloves, hats, and socks. The items can be dropped off in the box by the tree. Thank you for caring for our children.



We serve at **Esther’s Kitchen** on December 16th, at 6:00 p.m. at the United Presbyterian Church. Our meals just keep getting better and better! Join us for a hot meal and warm friendship. Everyone is always welcome to attend.

CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE November 2010 Meeting

Need for a Second Pastor: The council talked about possible options for a second pastor. Looking at the current plan, giving would need to increase in order to support an additional pastor position. Options for a half time pastor position were discussed and some follow up will be done before the December meeting.

Coffee Fellowship: There is a decline in the number of participants at the coffee fellowship between services. Would moving the coffee to the narthex make it more accessible and utilized? The Worship and Music Committee will talk further about this. If you have comments or ideas about this, please contact a member of that committee—Tim Tomasek, Shana Zahrbock, Betty Kauffman, Tom Nordby, Brian Kruse and La Oeltjenbruns.

Pastor Quist’s Ministry: Pastor Bob has worked out an arrangement with Pastor Quist on a list of congregation members on which to call monthly. He will also be a part of the Caring Friends Ministry/Group. The council is very thankful for his willingness to serve our congregation.

Bruce Berg’s Ordination: Pastor Berg began an interim position at Lake Wilson on 11/1/10. His ordination will be at 4pm on December 19 at First Lutheran. There will be a reception following the service. If interested in helping at the reception, please contact Shelly Maes.

2011 Plan: The council reviewed and held discussed on two proposed 2011 plans. Having an additional pastor will drive the plan upwards and can we support the additional costs/burdens to the current staff.



Sunday School Christmas Programs
to be presented between
Worship Services on December 12th – 9:30 a.m.

4year Olds – 1st Graders – “Colors of Christmas”
2nd – 6th Graders – “365 Days of Christmas”

All children will go to their Sunday School rooms at 8:30.
4 year olds – 1st Graders will sit with their parents following their program

You are invited to worship at 8:30 and stay for the programs if you wish.
Come to the programs at 9:30 a.m. and stay for worship at 10:45



Teacher Gifts

In lieu of buying individual gifts for Sunday School Teachers, the Education Committee gives families the opportunity to donate money to the Church Library to honor Sunday School Teachers. When you donate, the student will receive a “Christmas Card” to sign and give to their teacher. Committee members will be available to collect the donations in the gathering space outside the sanctuary on Dec. 5 and 12.

Church Office Phone – 532-2429
E-mail to the church office – firstluth@iw.net
First Lutheran Web Site – www.lstlutheran.org
Youth Web Site – www.first-lutheran-youth.blogspot.com

SW Minnesota Synod – www.swmnelca.org – join their email list!
News from the National ELCA www.elca.org

Adult Forum Sunday, Dec. 5 – 10:00 a.m./Fellowship Hall
What’s the difference between Alzheimer’s and Dementia? Do I know someone who has it, if so, what should I do? If you are looking for some information on the topic, join Christine Versaevel for an adult education session on memory loss. She will be presenting basic information on Alzheimer’s disease and other types of memory impairment.



Festival of Christmas Music
Sunday December 19th at 8:30 & 10:45 Worship
Strings/Bells/Choirs/Organ & Piano

Note: The Saturday, Dec. 18th Service will be traditional worship with Holy Communion – 5:30 p.m.

The Chancel Choir will host the Christmas Tea between services...Lefse will be available to purchase.



SHARE YOUR GIFTS....

It’s not too late to return your Time and Ability Response Sheets and 2011 Commitment cards...bring them to worship or mail them to the church office.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 1 Corinthians 12:4-5

Can You Help? Please check the enclosed Serving Schedule for December. If you see a place or places you can help out by serving, please call La Oeltjenbruns.

COFFEE SERVERS

At First Lutheran, we feel that social time between services brings the congregation together in the celebration of the grace of God. This is done year round and the entire congregation is welcome and encouraged to attend and meet other congregational members and visitors. During this time, coffee, juice and donuts (usually) are part of the social time. During the school year, the coffee servers responsibility is to be at the church kitchen in the basement no later than 8:15 a.m. on Sunday mornings until after clean up. Very specific instructions are listed in the church kitchen on how to make coffee and juice; where to find the donuts; and how to use the dishwasher and clean up.

COMMUNION ASSISTANTS

Assistants will help the pastor distribute communion on the 1st and 3rd weekends and occasionally at additional services. You will wear a robe and give the wafer with the words, “*The Body of Christ given for you.*”

GREETERS

As Greeters, you give the first friendly “WELCOME” to worshippers when they come. You will need to arrive 20 minutes prior to the service. Duties include directing people to coat racks, rest rooms, and answering questions they might have. **NOTE: If you greet on Saturday evenings you will also help with ushering.** This includes handing out bulletins, collecting the offering, and counting the attendance which is recorded on the calendar in the desk in the church entrance. If someone is unable to come to the communion rail it is your responsibility to let the pastor know.

LECTORS

Lectors read the first and second lessons as a part of the worship service. A copy of the bulletin insert containing the lessons you are to read will be mailed to you the week you are scheduled to read. You may read from this insert or from the large print Bible on the lectern. We prefer that you read from the New Revised Standard Version translation. There is usually a hymn before the lessons – go to the lectern during the last verse of the hymn.

USHERS

Please arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the service. Ushers help our worshippers to feel comfortable in our worship setting. They greet members and visitors as they hand out bulletins.

Ushers count those in attendance, (note-the calendar to record attendance is in the desk under the guest book); collect the offering and usher for communion. After the service they are asked to pick up bulletins and straighten the hymnals. Ushers at the last service are asked to remove the pages in the pew pads used to register members and guests and place them in the Narthex desk.

Communion Sundays – direct communicants forward down the center aisle from both sides, directing them to the center rail, beginning in the center sections. Please make Pastor aware of those unable to come to the altar so they may receive communion in their pew.

Service of Ordination

Congratulations and God’s blessings to Bruce Berg on his upcoming ordination! Bruce has accepted a call to be interim pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Lake Wilson. In preparation for that, Bruce is busy with planning for his ordination which will happen here on the afternoon of December 19th at 4:00 p.m. We have provided support and encouragement for Bruce throughout these past three years of his seminary preparation. Please plan to be along for this celebration which prayerfully ushers Bruce into his calling as an ordained pastor. Following the service of ordination, there will be a fellowship meal to which you are also invited. May we rejoice together with Bruce, Cathy and Kevin as the Lord leads them into new ventures of faith!



SHETEK LUTHERAN MINISTRIES – “Heaven and Nature Sing”

You are invited to experience the true wonders of Christmas – Live Nativity

December 11 & 12th – Shetek Lutheran Ministries Chapel, 5-7 p.m.

Free Will donation. Christmas Lighting, Sing-A-Long Sat. & Sun., Leota Men’s Chorus Saturday. Refreshments, Hot sandwich, chips & cookie in SLM Dining Hall.



Walking Together...Pastor Janet Colby

I am awestruck by God's abundant, steadfast nature. How can we *not* be humbled by the generous Hand of God reaching down to touch us with all that is encompassed and reflected in His amazing grace? And how can we not be exalted in knowing that He not only gives these great gifts *to us*, but invites *us to partner with Him* in distributing them—calling us to work together as companions in the bringing of His dream: that ALL people would know and share in the gift of His abundant blessings.

This invitation has been brought to greater reality to those of us who are called to live and work in that geographic area of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod known as the Prairie Conference. Living out God's call to mission to build the global body of Christ through the ELCA Companion Synod Program, the people of our Conference recently hosted the Rev. Dean P.S. Lwandle and Mr. Agrippa Ntombela from the Mfolozi Circuit of South Africa.

Nestled in the region of Kwa Zulu Natal, the Mfolozi Circuit reflects many of the same assets we share in, including rich, fertile land and deeply-loving people, committed to Christ and family values.

Exploring God's global mission has brought us to one another's homes and sanctuaries that we might meet, greet, and grow *together in Christ*.

We've worshipped *together*, prayed *together*, broken bread *together*, and shared the stories of each other's heartbreaks and joys.

Our Brothers were as overwhelmed by the depth of hospitality they received in "America" as they were amazed at the bounty which exists here.

The journey which brought them here on October 8th opened their eyes to how we farm: from the harvesting of crops with massive combines to the raising of livestock through precise feeding programs.

Together, we've shared the story of where we've been through visits to local historical centers and the Lower Sioux Indian Reservation.

Together, we've looked towards where we're going through the touring of our schools, libraries, hospitals, stores, nursing homes, businesses and the Courts.

Together, we've experienced God's presence through the gift of their preaching, and in fellowship through conversation, study, meals, ordination, confirmation, and worship.

Together, we've walked the farmland, shared the bounty of our gardens, and held not only the fruits of the fall harvest, but our hopes and dreams.

We trust in God to continue to reveal His own hopes and dreams for us. There is much work to be done, but it has now begun in earnest.

Together, the Prairie Conference Companion and Mfolozi Circuit Partnership Committees *thank you* for the sharing of your many gifts. To date, throughout the Prairie Conference, *you have given \$3,200.17 for the benefit of our Brothers & Sisters in the Mfolozi Circuit!!*

Together, we will identify new garden plots and use these dollars to cultivate the soil, enclose the plots with fencing, and plant seeds. The harvest which comes from these gardens will provide nourishment and sustenance to many who are without in our partner circuit.

Together, we will work to implement a pilot poultry project for the raising of chickens for distribution and consumption. The building of the necessary lodging for the chickens, as well as the daily care of the chicks, will further serve to bring much-needed employment.

Together, we are called to bring glory to God and build up the whole body of Christ. With God's help, and through his steadfast and abundant mercy and grace, we walk this journey.