



Acts of Faith

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Kewanee, Illinois

December 2007

Volume 7, Issue 12

“Unto Us a Child is Born”

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6)

The busy time is here... again! With Thanksgiving just over, we look forward to Christmas green, a white blanket of snow on the ground (except for you snow-birds ☺), and brightly colored packages under the tree. There’s always a lot to do. Just look at the calendar for the church: Midweek Advent services, Fellowship Hall Dedication, Christmas Eve, and New Year’s Eve services, Christmas Caroling, and regular church meetings. And, that’s just the church schedule. There’s also school events, work events, family events, community events; shopping and baking.

No one can say we don’t get the most out of the holiday season. Certainly, it’s a great time of the year, and there’s nothing wrong with getting the most out of it. There’s nothing wrong with Christmas lists, and shopping, and parties with family and friends.

But we know what the season is really all about. It’s really all about those four simple words from Isaiah “*A child is born.*” It even sounds simple. Children are born every day. Families grow. It’s the way things work.

We often put out of our minds that child birth is a messy business. We forget that in years past it was downright dangerous. Only a few hundred years ago, a woman giving birth had a one in four chance of dying. Really “a child is born” is not as simple as it sounds, actually it’s extraordinary. On a dark night, in a dark stable, in a far-away land, there was an extraordinary event “a child is born.” Everything was pretty normal as far as normal goes, for childbirth. There was pain and blood and a nervous father. It was another extraordinary birth of a human baby.

But, there was something else that made this extraordinary event something different. In the middle of all that was normal, there was something very extraordinary, because that completely normal baby boy was more than just extraordinary because he was born. He was much more than normal, and even much more than extraordinary. He was, and is, God. That night God was born as a baby boy. “A child is born” doesn’t begin to grasp the significance of God nursing at his mother’s breast. “A child is born” doesn’t begin to explain the Creator of the Universe wrapped in diapers. That must be why Isaiah says more: “*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*”

That’s what this busy time is *really* about—God in human flesh, born of a virgin, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. But, also let’s remember that that’s not the whole story. Being born is only the beginning. That same extra-extraordinary baby, lying in diapers, also hung naked on a cross. “A child is born” also fails to grasp what it means that God himself paid the awful price, the eternal consequences of human sin. That baby that was born in the normal, yet extraordinary, way—died in a very extraordinary way—as the complete and total payment for sin. It’s the gift that all the giving is about, God taking our sin and killing it by dying himself.

So, keep busy, celebrate fully, but remember the Baby, remember the cross, and what Jesus, that extra-extraordinary child, has done for you.

Blessings,
Pastor Fischer

Christmas Flowers

Please contact Lois Novotny if you would like to purchase a poinsettia plant to be used to decorate the worship services during the Christmas season.

THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMAS

“It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child Himself.” Charles Dickens

Advent Worship Services and Suppers

Midweek Advent worship services will be held at 7:00 PM on the Wednesday evenings of Dec. 5th, 12th, and 19th.

This year’s Advent worship services will be based on “The Hymns of Advent.”

New this year, will be light suppers served in the Fellowship Hall prior to the Advent services. Members of our Evangelism Committee are taking turns hosting the suppers. You may arrive between 5:30—6:30 for food and fellowship, followed by worship.

It’s very easy to think of Christmas primarily in terms of the shopping, decorating, cooking and baking that need to be done. The mid-week Advent worship services help to bring our focus back to the real meaning of the Christmas season—the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us for our salvation. Plan on attending these midweek services, and please bring along your friends and neighbors as well.

December’s Calendar

- Dec. 02 1st Sunday in Advent.**
- Dec. 05 Advent Supper, 5:30-6:30 PM
1st Advent Service, 7:00 PM
- Dec. 06 Evangelism Meeting, 6:30 PM
- Dec. 09 2nd Sunday in Advent**
- Dec. 10 Circuit Pastors’ Meeting, 9 AM,
Rock Island
- Dec. 12 Advent Supper, 5:30-6:30 PM
2nd Advent Service, 7:00 PM
- Dec. 16 3rd Sunday in Advent**
- Dec. 19 Youth Caroling, 5:00 PM
Advent Supper, 5:30-6:30 PM
3rd Advent Service, 7:00 PM
- Dec. 18 Women of Faith, Noon
- Dec. 19 Advent Supper, 5:30-6:30 PM
3rd Advent Service, 7:00 PM
- Dec. 20 Church Council Meeting, 7 PM
- Dec. 23 4th Sunday in Advent**
- Dec. 24 Nursing Home Services, 2 & 3 PM
Christmas Eve Worship, 7:00 PM
- Dec. 25 The Nativity of Our Lord**
- Dec. 26 Elders’ Mtg., 10 AM
- Dec. 27 Building Committee, 7 PM
- Dec. 30 1st Sunday after Christmas**
- Dec. 31 New Year’s Eve Worship, 7:00 PM**

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:2).

Christmas Eve Worship

Monday, Dec. 24th, 7:00 PM

New Year’s Eve Worship

Monday, Dec. 31st, 7:00 PM

Voters’ Meeting Scheduled

The next Voters’ Meeting is scheduled for January 6, 2008—following the worship service.

Election of new officers will be on the agenda. If you are asked to serve on a board or committee, please prayerfully consider the opportunity of serving your Lord in this way.

Women of Faith

The December meeting of Women of Faith will be a Christmas party pot-luck on the 18th. It will be hosted by Donna Becker and Tootie Godke. The devotion will be by Mary Ozburn. The program will be "Christmas at the White House," by Brock Tumbleson.

Fellowship Hall Dedication

On Sunday, Dec. 9th, following the worship service, we will dedicate the *Elizabeth Daniel Fraser Fellowship Hall*. Members of Elizabeth's family will be present, and a brunch will follow.

Please plan to attend this special occasion, and join in the celebration and fellowship.

Cookie Walk

Zion Lutheran Church, East Moline, is having a Cookie Walk, Saturday, Dec. 8th, from 9:00 AM-Noon. The cost is \$6.00 per pound. The proceeds will go to Zion's Little Lambs Preschool. Matching funds will be provided by Thrivent Financial. Zion is located at 17628 Hubbard Road, East Moline.

Giving to the Lord

Christian stewardship is the practice of systematic and proportionate giving of time, abilities, and material possessions. It is based on the conviction that these are a trust from God. They are to be used in His service for the benefit of all mankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love.

2008 offering envelopes will soon be available. Please do not use them until January. An initial offering envelope is also included to help defer the cost of providing the convenience of the envelope packets.

Christmas Caroling

All youth in the congregation are invited to meet at church on Sunday, Dec. 16th, 5:00 PM, for Christmas caroling, followed by a Christmas party at Pastor & Vary's home.

Recycling Still Pays!

Please remember that our church is still collecting aluminum cans, and other scrap aluminum.

Bring In Your Old Inkjet Cartridges

Your old inkjet printer cartridges are worth money to the Lutheran Women Missionary League (LWML). Please bring your old cartridges to church where a box is available for them.

Parking Lot

As the weather gets colder (and snowier) those who are more able-bodied are reminded to park at the west end (far end) of the church parking lot so that those have more difficulty walking can park closer to the church building. Thanks for your help.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Joy Hernandez	12/02
Carol Cook	12/03
Abigail Hamilton	12/05
Sandra Phillips	12/05
Mathew Peed	12/08
Lisa Huseby	12/08
Mary Ozburn	12/10
Amy Vincent	12/10
Corey Tavares	12/13
Cheryl Snyder	12/13
Ashley Phillips	12/15
Ernst Heinrich	12/16
Nicholas Leezer	12/16
Carolyn Kuster	12/17
Kaitlin Phillips	12/22
Florence Statz	12/26
Alyssa Croegaert	12/31

ANNIVERSARIES

Joan & Steve Becker	12/11
Melissa & Joshua Newman	12/16

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday Worship Service, 9:00 AM
Sunday School & Confirmation Class, 10:30 AM

Adult Bible Class, Wednesday, 5:45 PM
Wednesday Worship Service, 7:00 PM

Rev. Robert Fischer, Pastor

309-852-2787 (Church Phone)

309-714-1181 (Cell Phone)

309-853-5394 (Home Phone)

E-mail: pastor@faithkewanee.org

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Address Correction Requested

“O’ Come let us adore Him”

December 2007 Newsletter

What Happened to Merry Christmas?
by Robert C. Baker

Christmas seems to be under attack from what some have called “secular fundamentalism.” Presumably to avoid giving offense, some businesses forbid their employees from wishing customers “Merry Christmas,” retailers substitute *Holiday* trees for their Christmas cousins, and some school districts have transformed Christmas break into Winter break. This visually-stunning picture book for children asks, “What happened to Merry Christmas?”

As Christmas becomes more commercial and secular, Christian parents are increasingly challenged to teach about the real meaning of the day and about celebrating our Savior’s birth. In this story for children ages five and up, children can learn about a little boy who discovers that Christmas truly is everywhere we are. For those who believe, the message of God’s love in Jesus and the story of His birth are still found in the symbols and traditions of even a modern Christmas.

Join author Robert C. Baker in the conversation! You’ll find information about “Christmas wars,” links to Web sites offering guidance for parents, teachers, and administrators concerned about keeping Christmas in public schools, Christmas recipes, and-so-on on his blog:

www.christmaseverywhere.wordpress.com

What Others Are Saying

“*What Happened to Merry Christmas?* is a delightful book and one that should be put in the hands of committed Christian parents... I commend you for a little work that makes its point very delicately and at a level that small children... will be able to understand and appreciate.”

Thomas G. Doran

Bishop of Rockford, Illinois

“I think *What Happened to Merry Christmas?* is a beautiful and uplifting book, and a wonderful way to remind children--and those who once were children--of the many levels of religious joy that give Christmas its true meaning.”

Jeff Jacoby

Op-Ed columnist

The Boston Globe

Age(s): 5 - 9

Grade(s): Kindergarten - 4

Format: Hardback with Jacket

Item Number: 56-2426GT

Introductory Price: \$12.99

Order from Concordia Publishing House:

1-800-325-3040

or www.cph.org

Reduce Your Holiday Stress

The Advent and Christmas season can be stressful for some, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some ideas for bringing peace and renewal during the days leading up to the celebration of Christ's birth.

- Don't ignore your emotions. While Christmas is a great time of joy as we celebrate Christ's birth, many people are still dealing with emotions that are a part of our human natures: grieving the loss of a loved one, coping with a serious illness, fighting with family, going through a divorce, experiencing financial troubles, or feeling lonely. If this is a difficult time of the year, seek support from family, friends at church, your pastor, or a counselor. Consider volunteering your services to those in need. By helping someone else, you take the focus off of yourself, and what better way to celebrate the message of the season than by helping others?!
- Don't lose sight of the real meaning and reason for all the activities that take place at this time of the year. So much of the secular celebration centers on outward, physical, sensory experiences—the sights, smells, tastes, and sounds of Christmas. By focusing on the real meaning—our Savior being born to pay the penalty for our sins—you can gain a healthy perspective on the necessary priorities. You'll find that decorating your house to match that of a Dickens' novel isn't necessary to celebrate Christ's coming!
- Change the gift-giving tradition. Instead of buying a gift for every family member, set up a gift exchange: everyone draws the name of one family member and buys a nice gift or two for that person. Set a spending limit so budgets aren't strained. For grandparent gifts, have all the grandkids chip in to buy one big gift instead of each one giving a smaller one.
- Change the gift-wrapping tradition. Instead of waiting until December 23 to wrap all of the gifts, wrap as you buy (unless you bought all of your gifts on the 23rd)! Wrap a gift or two in the evening before going to bed.
- Prioritize your "To-Do" list. Are you doing what you do because it has to be done, or simply because you've always done it? Instead, simplify:
 - ◊ Cut back on your baking. Bake one type of cookie and organize a cookie exchange with your family and friends to add variety.
 - ◊ Limit the number of social events you host or attend.
 - ◊ Delegate tasks to family members. Don't feel that you must be responsible for everything.
- Take care of your health. You'll be at your best and more resistant to stress and viruses by following these suggestions:
 - ◊ Get plenty of sleep each night (at least 7 hours).
 - ◊ Exercise regularly.
 - ◊ Eat a well-balanced diet. It's okay to have some goodies at a party, but a few extra calories here and there can add up to holiday weight gain.
 - ◊ Limit alcohol intake. Alcohol is a depressant, and it can interfere with your sleep.
 - ◊ Take time to unwind. Find a quiet place to enjoy some time alone each day. Even a few minutes can make a difference.
 - ◊ Stick to your normal routine as much as possible.
- Adjust your expectations. Everything this time of year won't be perfect. Remember that family time can be both fun and stressful. Sometimes, expectations for reunions are too high, resulting in disappointment and frustration. Try to be realistic.
- Finally, celebrate—really celebrate and give thanks to God for the free gift of salvation that comes to us through Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. Let the joy of your salvation from your sins set the tone for the Christmas season.

From: [Better Health](#), Winter 2007, Concordia Plan Services