

Lewiston Church of the Brethren Lifestyle December 2005

Our vision: Bound together on a journey of faith, we are a Christ-centered community, prayerfully discovering and sharing God's love.

Our Mission: Knowing Christ and making Him known, through worship, growing in faith, community building and service.

Prepare!

I had the great and rare privilege to be at a retreat for women clergy this past week. Sixty ordained and licensed Brethren pastors, chaplains and church leaders met at a Christian retreat center in Wisconsin for an amazing time of fellowship, celebration, and spiritual nourishment. Our retreat leader was Jan Richardson, a Methodist minister and poet/artist who nurtured our creativity and encouraged us to find ways to share God's love and grace in new ways.

Jan is also a published author of devotional books that lift up the richness of the biblical stories. As we look to the coming Advent season, I'd like to share a reading from her recent work, *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas*.

The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before. It is not possible to keep it from coming, because it will. That's just how Advent works. What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's hindquarters fade in the distance.

So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder.

There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing.

For now stay. Wait.

Something is on the horizon.

It is easy to get caught up in the rush and busyness of the holiday season. So easy to miss seeing those visions of God hiding in the corners of our sight as we have our attention captured by the glitter and the lights. What we forget is that Advent is a time of waiting—joyful, expectant waiting for the “With us God,” Immanuel.

We will be offering set-apart times of waiting together for the coming of the Christ child in our midst. In this season of Advent we will hold Home Gatherings on two Sunday evenings—times of devotional reflection and refreshment. We will have special music, special readings, and special visuals in our Sunday morning worship. We will stay and wait, for that something on the horizon, the likes of which we have never seen before.

Come. Prepare your hearts and minds for the Advent of God among us.

--Sister Cara

December Scripture

- 4 Isaiah 40:1-11; Mark 1:1-8
- 11 Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; John 1:6-8, 19-28
- 18 Luke 1:26-38, 47-55
- 25 Isaiah 52:7-10, John 1:1-14

Women's Fellowship Christmas Brunch

Women's Fellowship will gather for its annual Christmas Party Saturday, Dec. 2nd, for a 11:45 brunch at the Victorian Lace in St. Charles.

You are asked to bring a gift for your Secret Pal and reveal who you are at this time.

Hold in prayer

...*Church of the Brethren*, that we “Fix our eyes on Jesus” and live according to God’s Word

...*our congregation* as we continue to determine future ministries

...*National and world leaders* that they seek God’s wisdom in their leadership and work for peace and justice for all people

....*New Church Development projects* in our district; *Hands of Christ* in Rochester, *Living Peace* in Sioux City, IA. and *Common Spirit* in Minneapolis*Dave Sumner* as he deals with health issues.*Judy Jamieson* who has been suffering chronic back pain.

...in thanksgiving, meditate on the “*gifts*” in your life. Praise the Creator and Sustainer for the people and the passion that give you life.

...give thanks for the *abundance* in your life. Recognize the blessing that abundance is, and seek out opportunities to share your abundance with others.

...in thanksgiving, reflect on the *blessing of Christ’s coming and what it means in your life*. Ask God to bring you deeper into relationship and challenge you to grow spiritually.

Because we have different ways of expressing our prayer requests and different needs for expression, we ask that you submit any prayer requests you wish to have listed in the bulletin and in the Lifestyle newsletter to the office in writing or via phone. Also notify the office when you wish to have that request removed or moved to “Thanks be to God” as we celebrate answered prayer. Let us continue to make prayer a priority in our congregational life!

NOVEMBER ATTENDANCE AND OFFERING

| Date | S. School Attendance | SS offering Offering | Worship Attendance | Worship Offering |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 6 th | | | 31..... | \$877.55 |
| 13 th |27..... | \$18.50..... | 38..... | 989.00 |
| 20 th | | | 59..... | 1,126.40 |
| Ave. | 27 | \$18.50 | 43 | \$997.65 |

\$6,584.00—projected need for our ministries each month.

\$2,992.95 received during first 3 Sundays of November

Our current deficit -\$10,744.29

God is able to do exceedingly abundantly—above what we can imagine.

Caroling

Choir invites any interested singers to join us for caroling on Wednesday, December 14. Meet at the church at 6:30pm.

Serving us in December

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Ushers: | Jeff & Jess |
| Greeters: | Rissers |
| Jr. Ushers: | 4 Parker Cage |
| | 11 Bethany Dahl |
| | 18 Elizabeth Lee |
| | 25 Daniel Dahl |
| Worship Leader: | 4 Sue Bollinger |
| | 11, 18 & 25 Roger Peckover |
| Worship team: | 4 & 11 Cliff, Sue, Karen |
| | 18 & 25 Uli, Jess, Judy |
| Special Music: | 4, 11, 18 Choir |
| | 25 Joyce & Linda |
| Children’s Story: | 4 Gordon Hoffert |
| | 18 Children’s Program |
| Children’s Church: | |
| | 4, 11 & 25 Gordon Hoffert |
| Nursery: | 4 Marilyn Sanders |
| | 11 Fran B. |
| | 18 Penny |
| | 25 Linda D. |

The Promise of His Coming

Dan Petry leads us through the Advent season with daily devotions that help us experience Christ’s continual coming into our lives between this day and That Day.

Please take a copy of the Advent devotional booklet “The Promise of His Coming” from the table in the narthex. Donations are appreciated. (\$2 each)

Prepare Ye the Way

It is Advent Season. This is the time when we prepare are hearts, minds and souls for the birth of our King. Come celebrate with us during Advent worship services as we eagerly, joyfully prepare for the coming of the Christ our King. Services will begin, as always at 10:00 a.m. There will be a children’s presentation on December 18th followed by a Fellowship dinner. On Christmas day we will have a celebration service beginning at 10:00 am which will include the bread and cup communion. There will be no Sunday School on the 25th. Please join us as part of your preparation for the birth of our King.

Deck the Halls

Please close your eyes and imagine with me, the smell of freshly baking cookies, the sounds of laughter, sounds of teasing, sounds of encouragement. If you come to the church on Friday, December the 2nd at 7 p.m. this is exactly what you will experience. We will be decking the halls of our church readying it for the Advent season, baking and of course, eating cookies. Come as part of preparing the church and ourselves for the birth of our King.

Emergency Disaster Fund grants send \$167,000 for disaster relief

Four grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund are sending a total of \$167,000 to continue response to Hurricane Katrina, provide cleanup buckets following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, respond to the destruction caused by tropical storm Stan in Central America, and support Disaster Child Care volunteers preparing to respond to Hurricane Wilma.

An additional allocation of \$100,000 continues support of the Church World Service response to Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast. The funds will continue to help deploy Disaster Response and Recover Liaisons; distribute Tools of Hope, blankets, and Gift of the Heart Kits; support longterm recovery organizations; provide spiritual care and care for caregivers; and support a relocation program for 500 displaced Americans.

Thank you!

One of our congregation's responses to assist Hurricane survivors was a donation to Acadian Baptist Center, where friends of Cliff and Sue Bollinger housed evacuees.

"We have just recently ended operations as an "Evacuee Shelter" for the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. We began accepting evacuees on August 26 and eventually housed up to 350 from Hurricane Katrina. With the event of Rita, we had, once again, close to 300 evacuees in residence. We closed as a shelter on October 21. We are most happy to report that all of our evacuees have returned home, found new homes, or been placed with relatives.

Your gift of \$552 was very much appreciated. We have been overwhelmed at the love and support of our churches, our community and individuals. Once again, thank you. We ask for your continued prayers for us as we move forward after this time of unique service." Read entire letter posted in narthex.

Dec. Birthdays & Anniversaries

4 Betty Wirt
5 Chelsey Hanson
10 Pastor Cara McCallister
18 Bill and Judy Jamieson
28 Earl Bockenbauer

Advent Home Gatherings

As any of you who have checked you calendar knows, this year Christmas Eve is on Saturday and Christmas Day is on Sunday. Because Christmas is a busy time with families, the NEW Committee has decided not to have a Christmas Eve service this year. Instead we encourage you and your family to join us on Sunday morning to appropriately celebrate the birth of Christ with other brothers and sisters in Christ. We will, however, be having two Sunday evening gatherings in people homes. This will be a time of singing, sharing, reading the Scripture and preparing our hearts, minds and souls for the birth of our King. The gatherings will be on December the 4th and December the 11th. It will be from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. On December the 4th we will meet in the home of Jim and Linda Risser. More information will follow. Please join us.

December Mission: Grace Place~ Promoting the Sanctity of Life, Strengthening Families

Our mission outreach for December is Grace Place in Winona. Their mission is to "become an outreach ministry of local churches and partner with many organizations to care for and serve others. Through Christ we will assist people in finding their place in God's family and our local community."

Their vision: "to promote the sanctity of life as families grow in purity, integrity, accountability, and relationship to God."

One-on-one mentoring, community night, volunteer experiences, and family activities are available for women, encouraging them to grow in faith, purity, integrity and accountability as they build trusting relationships.

"Godly Play" and "Kindermusik" are opportunities for children and families to grow.

The Grace Place Market Square Thrift Store, 66 E 2nd St, provides revenue for the ministry. Shop there and find a treasure!

Please give generously to support Grace Place when our offering is received December 18th.

Star of Wonder

As adults get older it becomes harder to enjoy the anticipation and wonder of Christmas. For parents, there is too much to do. On top of an already crazy schedule of school activities, music lessons, and sports events, we find ourselves on the Christmas Pageant or Advent Planning Committee. What should be an inspiring and fun activity turns into just one more thing to squeeze into a busy calendar. By the time Christmas morning rolls around we are too exhausted to notice the delight in our children's eyes, and can't figure out where the holiday went.

For a different kind of tradition to help recall the wonder and joy of the season, try extending the holiday beyond Christmas morning by celebrating Epiphany on January 6. Also called the Twelfth-Day because it falls 12 days after Christmas, Epiphany is a remembrance of the day the three kings, wise men, or Magi visited Jesus.

Here are some ideas to celebrate Epiphany:

- Invite a few friends to bring a dozen of their favorite Christmas cookies and something to share for an evening together – a favorite game, a story, a piece of Christmas music, a favorite carol, or a holiday skit. Begin the evening with the story of the three kings from Matthew 2.
- Bake a birthday cake and have a party for Jesus. Be sure to wear crowns to remember the kings!
- Get the family together for a day of undecorating the Christmas tree. Bake Christmas cookies and play Christmas music while taking down ornaments. Talk about them as they come off the tree. Are they home-made? Were they given by loved ones? Do they commemorate special events in the family?
- Fix a special dinner together. Research Epiphany on the Internet or at the library and share what you have learned during dinner.
- Save one of your Christmas gifts to open on Epiphany. This gives everyone something to look forward to after going back to school or work.

May you find your own way to enjoy the miracle of Christmas, and perhaps start a new family tradition, as you kneel with the kings before the manger of Christ

--Dave and Kathy Miller, members of West Richmond (Va.) Church of the Brethren where Dave serves as pastor. Kathy is an instructional and Library Information assistant for Herico County Public Schools.

Cookie Walk

Our annual Cookie Walk at Security State Bank in Lewiston, will be held Friday, December 16th. The community has come to expect our home-made Christmas cookies and looks forward to purchasing them each year.

Cookies will be sold by the pound and proceeds will benefit our mission outreach.

Bring cookies to the bank before 8 am or to Beth Cage's home on Thursday evening, December 15th.

Volunteers are invited to assist with the sale. Please contact Beth if you are available to help.

New tax law for 2005 is an opportunity for generous givers

The series of natural disasters this year has elicited an unprecedented response from people wanting to help the survivors. Now Congress has acted to encourage additional charitable giving for relief and to traditional charitable interests during this critical time, reported Ken Neher, director of Funding for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

"Of particular note is the KETRA (Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act), which includes special new incentives for those who wish to make charitable gifts of cash before the end of 2005," reported Neher. "In it Congress has suspended previous limits on deductions for gifts of cash to qualified not-for-profits for the rest of this year." For example, the General Board, On Earth Peace, Association of Brethren Caregivers, Bethany Seminary and even our local congregation are among those that will qualify, Neher said. Donors may now deduct qualified charitable gifts in amounts up to 100 percent of their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), instead of the more common 50 percent for most tax payers, Neher said.

"There are just so many ways a donor can use this bill to maximize their charitable giving," said Robert Sharpe, who has become a national town crier on giving issues and tax laws according to Neher. "The suspension of the 50 percent of AGI limit creates a short window of opportunity for larger gifts by donors that could otherwise cause them to exceed the amount they could normally deduct," Sharpe said.

An additional benefit is the possibility for donors over the age of 59 ½ to fund larger gifts with funds drawn directly from their IRAs and many other types of retirement accounts on a relatively tax-free basis, Neher added.

If you have questions, talk with your tax advisor or call Neher at 509 665-0441.

Faith Ramblings

I know that I have written about this subject before, but God keeps putting it in front of me. Maybe I'm still in the process of learning this lesson. Some of us are slower than others.

From time to time, we all experience disappointment and sometimes it can be devastating. Sometimes it stays with us for a goodly long time. When we are hurt, we can choose to hold on to that pain and become bitter, or we can choose to let it go and trust God to make it up to us. Statistics say that 7 out of every 10 people that you meet are angry about something. People that harbor anger often don't realize it, but they are poisoning their own lives. When we don't forgive, we're not hurting the other person, only ourselves.

God tells us that if we want his forgiveness and His blessings that we have to let go of hurts and pains of the past. We cannot let bitterness take root in our lives. Sometimes, instead of forgiving quickly, letting go of the hurts and pains of the past, we quietly bury them deep down inside our hearts and minds. We don't want to talk about the issue. We don't want to think about it. We want to ignore it and hope that it will go away. Guess what? That won't happen. It will cause us even more pain and sorrow and if we refuse to deal with it. That bitterness will contaminate our lives and it could even kill us.

Like toxic waste buried in the backyard, bitterness tends to resurface. One day the things you have tamped into your subconscious or buried deeply in the recesses of your heart will rise to the surface and begin to contaminate your life. What does that look like you ask? Sometimes it can be anger, depression or low self-esteem. It can show up in many different ways, sometimes doing damage before we even realize it has reappeared.

It's good to remember why you are offering forgiveness to someone that has hurt you badly. It's not for them, it's for you. If somebody has done you a great wrong, don't allow them to continue to hurt you by hanging on to it. You forgive to be free. Unforgiveness or living with grudges is building walls of separation. You keep others out, but you also imprison yourself behind those walls. Those walls also prevent God's blessing from pouring into your life. They'll keep your dreams from coming to pass. Forgiveness is a choice, but it is not an option. God requires it. If you forgive and trust God, He will bring justice into your life. Everything that has been taken from you will be restored by God. God will make your wrongs right.

If you want to live your best life now, you must learn to trust God to bring about justice in your life. The Bible says, " God is a just God and He will settle

and solve the cases of His people." That means you don't have to go around trying to pay everybody back for the wrong that they've done to you. God is your vindicator. You can start letting go and let God fight your battles for you.

I've been in a situation for quite a few months that a person of authority over me has been undermining my ability to perform. I'm being criticized for everything I do and discriminated against. I have presented this to God almost daily and all I kept hearing was keep a good attitude and set the example of being a Christian. God is keeping good records. He's closely watching the situation. I chose to trust God and turn it over to Him. I kept on being nice to this person and not sinking to my offender's level. Even though this went on for a goodly long time, it has finally come to a head and the offender is being dealt with by God and the proper authorities. "God is good, all the time"! God can take a negative and turn it into a positive when the time is right. It's so hard to find the patience to wait and have faith when we don't always understand God's plan. I know a song that I used to sing as a solo. It's entitled, "Trust His Heart". It goes something like this: *If you don't understand, and you can't see His hand, trust His heart.*

God works all things for the good for those who love Him and are called according to His ways. Forgiveness also includes forgiving yourself when you have made bad choices and done things that you later regretted. If you have asked God for His forgiveness, then you have to be able to receive that forgiveness and forgive yourself. God allows us to be human. Hanging on to our past failures is the same as harboring grudges. It keeps us from moving into the future that God has planned for us. God will take your scars and turn them into stars for His glory.

When you go through difficult times, make sure you pass the test. Don't be stubborn and hardheaded like me. Recognize that God is refining you, knocking off some of your rough edges. Stand strong and fight the good fight of faith. God has called each of us to be champions; you are destined to win. If you will work with God and keep a good attitude, then no matter what comes against you, the Bible says that all things--not just the good things in life, but all things-- will work together for your good! I believe it! How about you?

--Linda Risser

God's Precious Gift of Love

God is Good - All the time. All the time, God is Good! We say this to one another from time to time. Do we really believe it? Do we believe that God wants the Best for us?

In the beginning, God created a Perfect World. God looked at His work and saw that it was Good! Why did He create this delightful place (Eden means delightful). God created this wonderful, perfect place with luscious trees, just-right, warm temperatures, (no need for clothing or expensive fuel to heat any homes, no need for any dwellings), perfect weather (no stormy turbulences, no rain --the earth was watered with a mist). There was no pain, no stress, no weeds to pull, no illnesses. God's glory was all around them. Sounds like a perfect, wonderful place and time to live, doesn't it. And, God created this for whom? For us, mankind.

But mankind, Adam and Eve, messed it up when they gave in to Satan's wily ways of bringing doubts about God's authority. They listened to his cunning suggestions, turning away from full obedience to God. Big mistake! and mankind has followed suit ever since. And, ever since, we have seen the havoc of sin in the world.

But God is still the same Great God. He still wants what is best for us, His Children. He desires for us to be happy, joyful, at peace, healthy, and have the desires of our heart. Just like we, as parents, have the desire to see our children have the best and be happy. Over and over, again and again, God reaches down to His people, wanting the best for us. And, over and over again, mankind falls short of God's blessings by allowing Satan to plant seeds of doubt, fear, guilt, insecurities, and worries which take us away from fully believing in God's power and ability to 'do all things' and to do 'Great things'. What a disappointment this must be to God. The same as with the parent/child relationship. We want so much to have the best for our children. But children have choices. Sometimes choices take them to times of discouragement, pain, and disappointment. We, as parents, watch, knowing another choice would have brought better, happier results. We love them through the pain and disappointments. Our desire is still the same. We want them to have the best, and be happily fulfilled in life.

God has a special plan and purpose for each one of us and He wants the Best for us. So much so, that He sacrificially gave His most Precious Son to this world to once again redeem us and show how much He loves us. This Precious Gift of Love, Jesus, given to us, so we can have Life abundantly. Jesus showed us the way to have Joy in our hearts, peace of soul

and mind. Hope for today and the future, Love in abundance, and Blessings beyond measure.

Let us not yield to Satan's wily seductions. Let us allow Jesus to penetrate our hearts and saturate our very being. He will transform us from the inside out. The results will be the fruits of the Spirit that Paul writes about in Galatians 5:22, 23. He will fill us with Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control. As we allow Jesus to have full control of our being, He will move us to give a cup of water, feed the hungry, assist the poor, take the hand of the hurting, walk with the lonely. Jesus will motivate us to "Do unto others, as we would have them do unto us."

As we Celebrate during this Christmas Season and move forward into the New Year ahead, let us give abundant thanks to God for His most Perfect, Precious Gift of Love. As our voices lift up God's Goodness and our hearts sing Praises to His Majesty and His Wondrous Love, we will anticipate His Blessings upon us.

Giving Thanks to God for His abundant Blessings, Judy Mill

A Greater Gift

Do your Christmas shopping via the "Greater Gift" catalog -- lots of interesting items from around the world, with fair trade for artisans. We'll place our order together and will use profits toward reducing our budget deficit. See Beth Cage for further information.

Welcome Home Project: e-mail list

On Earth Peace & the Association of Brethren Caregivers are collaborating on the Welcome Home Project: A Living Peace Church Response for Returning Military Personnel and others. For nearly a year, a committee has considered how the Church of the Brethren can respond to soldiers returning home from conflict zones and support their families.

An e-mail list has been created for the project and we all are invited to join. The list provides Brethren with the opportunity to share ministry ideas and network about congregational outreach.

"As a Living Peace church, our denomination has much to offer people who may be hurting and need a safe place to share their feelings and receive support," said a release from the two agencies. Subscribe by visiting:

<http://listserver.emountain.net/mailman/listinfo/welcomehomeproject>. For more information about the project visit: www.brethren.org/oepa/WelcomHomeProject.html. Questions may be directed to Matt Guynn of On Earth Peace at 765-962-6234.