

BETHEL NEWSLETTER

January 2008

Reaching Out – Praying, Caring, Sharing

Holdrege, Nebraska

Why Go To Church?

Have you ever been asked the question, “Why do you go to church?” If so, what was your response? If not, what would be your response? What does worship mean to you? These are important questions to be asking ourselves to help us to focus once again on the meaning of worship for our spiritual health. Otherwise, like many other aspects of our lives it is easy to get into a routine of going through the motions.

As we begin 2008, I would like to challenge you to take a fresh look at the role of worship in helping us to grow in our faith. It is a regular need we have if we are to be effective in our discipleship for Jesus Christ. God wants us to gather in His name to be renewed for faith living.

I have described worship this way – it is a renewal cycle that helps us get back on track with our walk with God. We come to worship sometimes dragging the garbage of the past week. That may include our sense of sinfulness, frustrations with life, disappointments, sorrows, etc. God invites us to leave all that at the door of worship as we confess before Him and one another and receive the words of forgiveness and new life. We shed our garbage and prepare to be renewed with word and sacraments for going back out into the world. For this to happen, our worship is going to require we put some real effort into what is going on.

This includes things such as paying attention to the words of hymns that are being sung. For some singing is difficult, but let’s not miss the message of the hymn. It means listening closely and following along with the reading of scripture. The more of our senses we use the more focused we will be on the message before us. It means applying the message of the sermon to our everyday lives. Everyone should leave asking what did the sermon say to me today in regards to my growth in faith.

Worship helps us to be better prepared to live the week to come. It wouldn’t hurt for folks to discuss what the service or sermon meant to them with others afterward rather than being critical of those who lead worship. There are different times

for worship and styles of worship which should not be topics of criticism but opportunities to reach more folks.

Hopefully this will help answer why go to church. I would like to close with the article I ran across sometime ago. I think it helps answer the question before us.

Why Go To Church?

A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

“I’ve gone for 30 years now,” he wrote, “and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me I can’t remember a single one of them. So I think I’m wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.”

This started a real controversy in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until some wrote this clincher:

“I’ve been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!”

When you are DOWN to nothing. . . God is UP to something!

Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!

--Author Unknown--

Blessing in your worship life,
Pastor David Sites

The Siteses would like to thank all who remembered us with cards and gifts during the Christmas season. You have blessed us with your thoughtfulness. Blessings to all of you in the New Year.

“Here I am! Come play with me!”**Blessed New Year to Everyone!**

At the time I'm writing this, cards, gifts and well-wishes are still pouring into the Metzger house. To the multitude of people too numerous to name individually—thank you. It has meant a great deal to us. Through you God's gifts continue to pour out.

There is a family in North Dakota that throws their own private winter carnival on snow days when school is canceled and they run out of things to do in the house. Each child sets up their own “booth” somewhere in the house, and everyone takes turns at each booth. Sometimes they even made signs to advertise their booth throughout the house.

During one such snow day, Maria—then around 4 ½ years old—posted signs for an “Amazing Attraction in Maria's Room” throughout the kitchen and living room. As the family made their way upstairs toward her room, they saw signs along the stairwell that read, “It's Really Great!” “A Must-See!” “It'll Only Happen Once!”

When her parents and sisters and brother reached her room, they knocked on the door and said, “Maria, we're here. What are we going to see?” Maria threw open the door and said, “It's ME! Come PLAY with ME!”

Maria's family followed the signs and received exactly what was promised—a once-in-lifetime chance to play with a 4 ½ year old little girl—and her parents marveled at it. Not bad for a snowbound day.

By the time you read this the Christmas season will most likely be over and the season of Epiphany will be here. An epiphany is an “Ah-ha!” moment. It's a moment of revelation and realization that changes the way we look at things.

Throughout Advent we remembered the signs and prophecies that lead to the birth of the Christ child. At Christmas we remembered him popping into the world, announcing his coming with angels singing and a newborn baby crying. During Epiphany we began to realize just what happened on Christmas day. The texts assigned for each Sunday tell us something more about what Jesus is like and what he sets out to do. If we read some of the

verses surrounding the texts, we find that not everyone fully understood or even liked everything they saw, because it meant great change for them. Nevertheless, the changes that he brought—the changes he continues to bring—are changes that he brings with love.

Starting in January we'll be offering a number of adult study opportunities here at Bethel. These will be times to delve into the Bible, Lutheran teaching, and other topics. Through them we will encounter the living God, and we will probably be changed as a result of it. I encourage everyone to sign up for any or all them.

Intern Nathan Metzger

God's blessings and welcome to the New Year, 2008. Wow another New Year is beginning. I haven't had time or taken the time to digest 2007. Anyway *Happy New Year* and may it be the best year of your life.

I would like to start this New Year with a little humor. The manager of a large office noticed a new man one day and told him to come into his office. “What is your name?” was the first thing the manager asked the new guy. “John,” the new guy replied. The manager, “Look, I don't know what kind of a namby-pamby place you worked at before, but I don't call anyone by his first name. It breeds familiarity and that leads to a breakdown in authority. I refer to my employees by their last name only; Smith, Jones, Baker, that's all. I am to be referred to only as Mr. Robertson. Now that we got that straight, what is your last name?” The new guy sighed and said, “Darling. My name is John Darling.” To which the manager replied, “Okay, John, the next thing I want to tell you is. . . .”

These days, it's not hard to spend every waking (and sleeping) moment connected to some sort of device that injects information into our brains. From morning till night, we are bombarded by 24 hour news channel, billboards, web sites, e-mails, and other potential mental clamor. The cell phone has become a “drug.” Many kids today cannot walk from one class to the next without texting their friends, making calls, or checking their e-mail.

This may sound funny, but the perpetually noisy mind simply has become a spiritual hazard.

Many of us have become addicts or addicted to this noise. The real danger is that our noisy life can and has lured us away from God. Many of us, unknowingly have gone from not being able to escape the noise, to not really wanting to escape. I recently read where a Blackberry communication center went down for 14 hours. Many users claimed their lives were thrown into turmoil. One user said, "I pushed the button like a nervous habit, all day, and all night. When you don't get your e-mail, you're like a drug user, cut from your source!"

God's voice grows faint-with all the noise, that is, of course, until something happens that makes us feel our need for Him. Is there any hope of getting our addiction to noise under control? It certainly isn't going to happen on its own—we all need to take deliberate action. We need to shut-off and begin to listen to God more clearly in quiet time. Just like the alcoholic, we cannot take one more drink and think we are quitting. When we listen to God, we find that much of the overwhelming stress, irritability, or confusion we have been experiencing will begin to calm at the sound of His voice, which says, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39).

God Bless.
Darrel Wissmann PMA



GOLD STAR AWARD

Congratulations to Paula Knepper and The Group on their Christmas Eve performance of "Bethlehem's Blessed Babe". This was Paula's 22nd year of putting together this program. This year's program was excellent – it exceeded all expectations and truly is a spiritual experience!!! Paula begins working on the program as early as July, writing the script, deciding on Bible verses, and preparing the music. She contacts many of her former students who plan to be home for Christmas and sends music and scripts to them. At times The Group has time for only one or two rehearsals before the performance.

THANK YOU Paula for all your time, talents and efforts. You are a blessing to the community!!

January Ushers

8:30 a.m.

Kent Hansen
Tim Gabriel
Bernard Woodside
Brian Gray

11:00 a.m.

Kent Exstrom
Tom Nutt
Tye Carlson
Phil Hinrichs

6:30 p.m. Saturday Night Ushers

Jan. 5	Randy Aldrich
Jan. 13	Gregg Ericksen
Jan. 20	Craig Sandell
Jan. 27	Kent Person

AS A PLACE OF GRACE WE **PRAY** for each other as members and friends of this congregation:

Jan. 6, 2008

Ronald & Kathryn Ronhovde
Kirk Ronhovde
Maurice & April Green
Michell, Kristen
Dale & Brenda Gray
Colby, Allison, Matthew

Jan. 13, 2008

Jim & Lorraine Gracey
Clendon Rost
Marcia Rost
Duane & Beverly Rupkalvis

Jan. 20, 2008

Earl & Mary Root
Lori Root
Lynn & Lisa Root
Brian Gnuse
Brenna

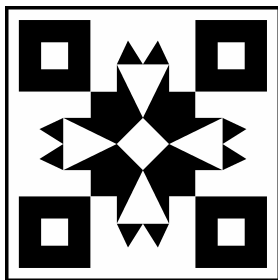
Jan. 27, 2008

Tom & Mary Rust
Jeff Rust
Brian Rust
Sharon Lindsay

From January through October, on the fourth Thursday of the month, a dedicated group of ladies tie quilts. In November the quilts are packed and sent to Lutheran World Relief.

Where do these quilts go? In 2006, 310,856 quilts were sent to seventeen foreign countries. The largest amount of quilts go to Azerbaijan, India, Serbia, Sierra Leone and Thailand.

In January 2007, 35 U.S. Lutheran Women visited Tanzania and witnessed how quilts and kits are transformed into warm and comforting personal possessions for those in need. Tanzania received 21,000 quilts, 8,200 school kits and 3,000 health kits.



When church members sit and tie a quilt, give and assemble kits, they are tied together with communities like those in Tanzania, communities who love, appreciate, and use the quilts and kits. Lutheran World

Relief's mission is a network of people, the vast majority of who have never and will never meet, yet somehow manage to allow their lives to be woven together.

Recipe for a Happy New Year

Take 12 whole months. Clean them thoroughly of all bitterness, hate, and jealousy. Make them just as fresh and clean as possible. Now cut each month into 28, 30 or 31 different parts, but don't make up the whole batch at once. Prepare it one day at a time out of these ingredients.

Mix well into each day one part of faith, one part of patience, one part of courage, and one part of work. Add to each day one part of hope, faithfulness, generosity, and kindness. Blend with on part prayer, one part meditation, and one good deed. Season the whole with a dash of good spirits, a sprinkle of fun, a pinch of play, and a cupful of good humor.

Pour all of this into a vessel of love. Cook thoroughly over radiant joy, garnish with a smile, and serve with quietness, unselfishness, and cheerfulness. You're bound to have a happy new year



GriefShare® will be offered starting January 28, 2008 and ending April 21, 2008. Classes are scheduled 7:00-9:00 p.m. at Bethel Lutheran Church, Holdrege, in the lounge

Each GriefShare® session includes a video seminar featuring top experts on grief and recovery subjects. GriefShare® is a nondenominational group and features biblical teaching of grief and recovery topics.

The registration fee of \$13 includes cost of materials. For more information contact Bethel Lutheran Church (995-5361) or Ivan and Sandra Samuelson (995-8818).

Fund Our Intern for a Day

The Parish Planning Council had made the Internship Fund a special project. We have had nine interns in recent years and they have all been a great blessing to Bethel. The internship program has also been a blessing to the seminary and especially to our interns themselves. Bethel is a wonderful place to train our future pastors. Would you consider funding our intern for one or more days? The cost is \$90/day and the intern will receive a card recognizing your donation. This donation will also help Bethel meet its budget requirements for 2008. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

Finance Committee
Stuart P. Embury MD, Chairman

Worship & Music

Organ Builders Concert

Mark February 10, 2008 on your calendars. That is the Sunday afternoon Dan Vaughan will present his organ builders concert. Several Bethel members will also be participating with a reception following the concert. Watch for more details next month.