

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
1326 South 26 Street
Omaha, NE 68105-2380

Return Service Requested
Dated Material

Email: graceluth@graceluth.com
Web Site: www.graceluth.com

REGULAR SUNDAY EVENTS

9:00 A.M. Christian Education

10:30 A.M. Worship Service

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary – Pam Reents
Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Cody Talarico
Sexton - Ambros Lado/Brian Sutej
Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill
Faith in Action - Julie Chytil

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*Inspired By Christ, it is our mission
to share God's Word and Love in
care and in service to all.*

December 2007



THE GRACE MESSENGER



2007 Council Members

Ron Adrian
June Hilmer
Ernest Olson

Andrew Edwards
David Hufford
Brenda Spahr
Pastor Laaker

Sarah Emery
Greg Hula

Council Notes

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Margie Sutej

The regular meeting of the Council was held November 13th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing – Kathryn Reichert, Bobby Agesacker, Bernard Jacobs, the Moore Family, Cheryl Brown's grandson, Luke, Janet Baumberg, Ambros Lado, little baby Vivian, care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal, we pray for safety of Ivo, direction in becoming a multi-racial congregation, all of the unrest and conflict in the world and for safety of all of our military personnel. Pastor led devotions from Psalm 111:2 and Romans 8:32; which led to discussions on how Paul reminds us of God's great love by sending us his only son. God's love is restored, not broken.

Visions for Ministry: Council continued sharing in discussion of "One Body One Spirit" by George Yancey, chapters 11 & 12, Location and Adaptability.

Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. Please continue to give generously.

Christian Education Pastor asked the council to pray and think about changing the children's Sunday school from Sunday morning to an evening class during the week, something new and different.

Evangelism/Outreach KETV has now included a free listing with to show Grace Lutheran information in the Faith Finding Directory. We will not have paid Yellow Pages advertisement in 2008, which will save \$70.00 monthly. The Halloween Party made \$308.00, an estimated 200 people in attendance.

Finance Council ratified the Endowment Report regarding donations to various ministries. A Processional Cross has been ordered and will be a memorial to Myra Watson. Sharon Irwin was pleased with the choice. New communion ware, which includes four wine trays with a base and the wafer tray and base, will also be paid for from the Watson Memorial.

Property Graffiti appeared on our building in the alley and will be called in and the citywide graffiti crew will take care of this. Pastor expressed a desire to block or brick out the west basement windows that are currently covered by plywood.

Service/Social Ministry Interfaith Health Ministries has won a major national award from the Center of Disease Control. Be sure and watch for the announcement in the Omaha World Herald. The Neighbor's South Habitat House has been completed and the dedication will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 18, 2007. The address is 2817 Madison Street; all are welcome to attend.

Support/Stewardship A Dinner Invitation for the 2008 Fall Stewardship will be mailed out shortly followed by our Pledge cards and Time and Talent forms. There will be a video to watch after lunch, it is the same video footage the council viewed at the Gretna Stewardship meeting this past fall. Our Sudanese members will be invited to the luncheon, too.

Worship Joint Thanksgiving Eve Service will be on November 21st at Wheeler's Presbyterian Church.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: The Destination Midtown Tours will be held on Sunday, December 2nd this year; they will provide luminaries to help decorate the outside of the church. The tour will be from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.; this will give people a chance to see the churches in the Mid-Town area. We will need people to light the luminaries, maybe hand out hot apple cider, bake cookies and just be around to greet people.

Announcements: Greg will bring treats for our December meeting.

An Advent Message From the Pastor

Historically, the primary sanctuary color of Advent is **Purple**. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. Purple is still used in Catholic churches. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us, is to reveal God and God's grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection. To reflect this emphasis, originally Advent was a time of penitence and fasting, much as the Season of Lent and so shared the color of Lent.

In recent times, however, Advent has undergone a shift in emphasis, reflected in a change of colors used in many churches. Except in the Eastern churches, the penitential aspect of the Season has been almost totally replaced by an emphasis on hope and anticipation.

In many churches the third Sunday remains the Sunday of Joy marked by pink or rose. However, most Protestant churches now use blue to distinguish the Season of Advent from Lent. **Royal Blue** is sometimes used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use **Bright Blue** to symbolize the night sky, the anticipation of the impending announcement of the King's coming, or to symbolize the waters of Genesis 1, the beginning of a new creation.

The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power. That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's inbreaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

May your Advent time be marked with anticipation and celebration of God's amazing love; love for God's world, love for you.

Pastor Laaker



Stewardship 2008
"Faithful, Hopeful, Loving, Thankful "

During the month of November, each Sunday morning's theme revolved around one of the four action words. The four Sunday morning bulletins had a survey form to fill out and turn in. Here are the results of that survey. Thank you to all the members who participated.

Reminder - If you have not taken time to turn in your 2008 Pledge Card or your Time and Talent Booklet, please consider filling them out and dropping them off at the church office. Your commitment to God for the coming year is an important part of the spiritual growth you can expect in 2008.

Try something new! See what God will teach you.

Responses to Faithful, Hopeful, Loving, Thankful Emphasis:

Who have been Faithful Servants in this congregation?

Donna & Ron Adrian	Louise Alsager	Jim & Joann Costello
Vicki Cox	Andrew Edwards	Alice Friedlander
Ken Hilmer	Janet & Greg Hula	David Hufford
John & Gertrude Hufford	Anna Jelinek	Pastor & Mary Laaker
Ambros & Elizabeth Lado	Robert Larson	Gloria Moore
Bob & Lavonne Moss	Marsha & Loren Moyer	Ivo & Regina Mounto
Barbara Nelson	Joe & Barb Narducci	Robert Newton
Don & Norma Olson	Pam Reents	Harold & Gertrude Settgest
Robert Settgest	Brenda Spahr	Margie & Brian Sutej
Cody & Jen Talarico	Grace Traynor	Jerry & Marilyn Van Ormer
Myra Watson	Jack Williams	

Some traits or actions that demonstrate Faithfulness:

Leader in Faith with children	Going above and beyond duties	
Giving of themselves unselfishly	Friendly, helpful, caring	
Loving	Always ready to serve	Taking care of the church
Being there for the people	Responsible	Welcoming of strangers
Warmth and graciousness	Consistent in worship attendance	Loyalty

Ways to demonstrate more faithfulness:

Worship attendance	Build relationships with other at church	
Welcome others intentionally	Treatment of the hungry	More prayerful
Give generously trusting God to provide	Complain less	
Include the younger generation		

Things liked best about this congregation:

Small	Homelike	Familiar	Welcoming of Sudanese
Friendly faces			

Things this congregation does best:

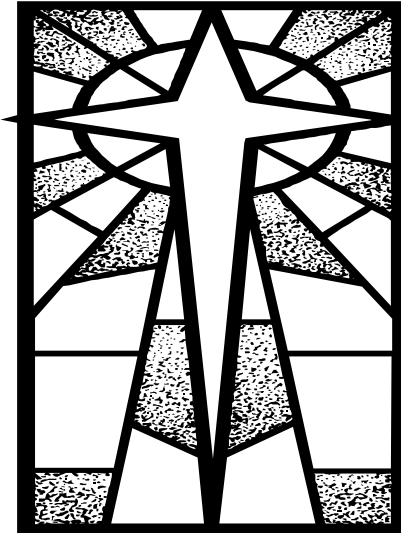
Generous in monetary giving	Supportive in time of personal need
Share life's problems	

Things this congregation needs most:

Outreach	More members	More loving
More participation in activities	Not to give up hope	
Intentional welcome of all		

Things that show this is a Loving congregation:

Giving to those in need	Service within the community
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Lutheran Women of Omaha Luncheon

December 11, 2007 - 11:30 a.m.

Program: Reverend James Rasmussen

Wider Omaha Lutheran School Association

Cost: \$5.00 for the Luncheon

Monetary gift: Cristo Rey Food Pantry
or canned foods (No green beans or pork and beans please)

Reservations due by December 9th

Call Lorraine Palma at 455-4342

Or Mardelle Gocek at 292-1328

W/ELCA Board Meeting

December 4 at the church.

1:00 p.m.

Hostess: LaVonne Moss



*Women of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*



Grace Women's Christmas Luncheon

December 18, 2007

Piccolo Pete's Restaurant

2202 South 20 Street

1:00 p.m.

This year, instead of a gift exchange,
an offering will be taken for the Lutheran Food Pantry.

Invite your girlfriends to come.

The food's great but the fellowship's the best part!

The Mitten Tree is up!

Each year, people from Grace Lutheran Church bring donations of mittens, gloves, scarves, and other warm items and place them on the tree. These gifts of warmth are donated to area shelters.

Winter items are needed in all sizes.
Bring your donations and place them on the tree.



A decorative horizontal banner featuring a red ribbon, green pine branches, and three golden bells. The ribbon is tied in a bow in the center, and the bells are positioned at the ends and in the middle. The pine branches are green and have small brown dots representing needles.

- ## Praise item!

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Richard Moore

Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- Let's encourage each other as we see God's hand in answering our prayers.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA

HERE at Grace Lutheran Church
Sunday, December 9, 2007
During morning Worship at 10:30 a.m.
Invite your friends

The 40 member Senior Choir of Rejoice! Lutheran Church will present an Advent Cantata at Grace Lutheran on Sunday, December 9 during morning worship. The choir, under the direction of Ray Swartz and accompanied by Nancy Riley, will sing a variety of traditional and contemporary selections by various composers that reflect the sounds of the season.

A cookie and coffee reception is planned following the service. If you can provide cookies, please sign up on the bulletin board.

Use this music-filled event to invite your neighbors to experience God's wonderful gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.



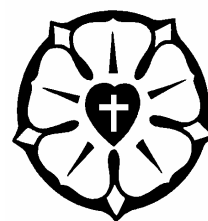
Musicians Still Needed!

There is still time to join the choir for their presentation during worship on December 16th. and for Christmas Eve.

The choir will practice each Sunday morning after worship through the month of December.

"On Being Lutheran" Study

"Reflections on Church, Theology, and Faith"



Understanding the words of Martin Luther and applying them today.

Tuesday Evening December 4 and December 18.
7:00 p.m. in the Upper Fellowship Hall
Come to one session or all of them!
Drop-in's Welcome!

Getting the Perfect Gift



"I've seen you stalking the malls, walking the aisles, searching for that extra-special gift. Stashing away a few dollars a month to buy him some lizard-skin boots; staring at a thousand rings to find her the best diamond; staying up all night Christmas Eve, assembling the new bicycle.

Why do you do it? So the eyes will pop, the jaw will drop. To hear those words of disbelief: "You did this for me?"

And that is why God did it. Next time a sunrise steals your breath or a meadow of flowers leaves you speechless, remain that way. Say nothing, and listen as heaven whispers,
"Do you like it? I did it just for you."

—Max Lucado/*The Great House of God* (Word)



**4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Monday thru Thursday**

**Games, Crafts, and Fun
Geared for Elementary Kids!**

Free!

Director, Brenda Spahr

There will be no After School Program during winter break.
The last day in December will be Thursday, December 20th. The
program will resume on January 7th, 2008.

Happy Holidays from Brenda and the Kids of
the AfterSchool Program!

Happenin' in the Grace Lutheran Church Library

Your church library is a great place to find something good to read.

The Library Committee has been shopping for new books. Over 20
new titles have been added, many of them from requests for the next
book in a popular series. Check it out!!!



Got Your 2008 Scripture Calendar Yet?

This is a beautiful, high quality calendar
with scripture verses and wonderful scenes.

Similar calendars at the mall and stationary shops sell for up to \$12.00!

Buy Them for Gifts or for Yourself.

Only \$5.00 each

Hurry! Quantities are Limited!

Coming Event for the Library! 3rd Annual Used book Sale .

Start saving your good used books to donate at the end of
January for our Lenten Used Book Sale. Proceeds go for Li-
brary books and projects.



POINSETTIAS

Cost:

\$8.00 each

A Sign Up sheet
has been posted on the Bulletin Board

Be sure to designate whether you would like to take your flowers home after the holiday or donate them to the church for shut-ins or staff.

Deadline: December 3, 2007



2008 Flower Chart

The 2008 Flower Chart will be posted on the bulletin board outside the church office.

The Flower Chart sign-up is your opportunity to sponsor flowers for a special Sunday in honor of an important event in your family's life or in memory of someone dear to you. The cost to sponsor flowers for a Sunday is \$12.00.

We need volunteers to sign up each month to pick up the flowers for the altar.

Sign up on the Flower Chart.

The flowers need to be picked up before 10:00 a.m. each Sunday morning at the Hy-Vee at 50th and Center. The church is billed so you will not need to pay for them at the time of pick up.

Contact Marilyn Van Ormer or Barb Narducci for more details.



Prayer Service

December 11, 2007

7:00 p.m.

Grace Lutheran Church

1326 S 26 St.

People of all Faiths Welcome!

Come for a quiet time of Meditation,
Soft lighting, Gentle Music
Prayer and Anointing for Healing.

Leave your holiday hustle and bustle behind.
Take the chance to sit quietly and listen to God speak
as you prepare for the celebration of His birth!

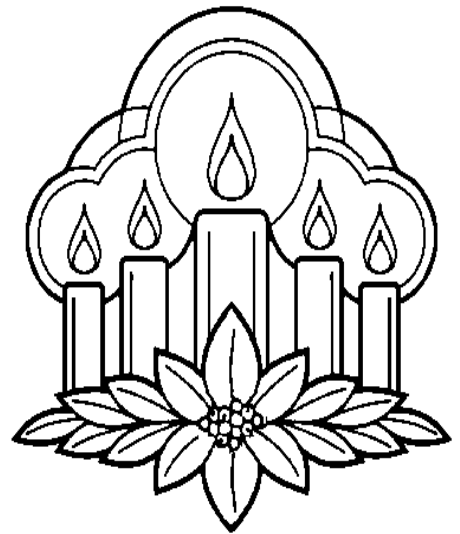


Special Worship Opportunities
at Grace Lutheran Church
During December

"Prophets and Angels"

An Advent Festival of Lessons and Carols
with music performed by the Grace Choir

Sunday, December 16, 2007



Christmas
Eve
Worship



December 24, 2007

4:30 p.m.

&

Candle Light Service

11:00 p.m.

Adult Choir

Candles

Carols

Readings

Scripture

Silent Night Holy Night
Christ the Savior is Born!



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

Project Hope

The Theme for December is Canned Soup or Stew.

Book Bank

Project Hope is developing an ongoing book bank where people can take and keep a book or two for themselves or their children. Many of us have books that we've read or our children have outgrown that could be donated to Project Hope. Items of interest are children's books of all levels, inspirational, devotional or religious books, National Geographic magazines, Guideposts and the Lutheran Witness. Please label donations "Project Hope Book Bank."

Grace Quilters Send Quilts Around the World

The women of the Grace Quilters completed many beautiful quilts and lap robes to be distributed around the globe as part of the Lutheran World Relief Ingathering in November. 35 full size quilts recycled from polyester clothing were sent to LWR. 19 lap robes were also sent to various nursing homes around the city to provide warmth to the elderly.



Get involved!
Come on Mondays and help!
People needed to cut out
squares or tie quilts.
No Experience Necessary!

Please consider a gift to a charity during your Christmas giving!

Use a Pew envelope or a World Hunger envelope and
list the project you desire your gift to be given to.

Tax Deduction Alert

You may be able to make a special year-end gift to Grace Lutheran Church or to one or more of the Serving Arms of the Church if you are 70 1/2 years of age and own an IRA. Gifts will be eligible for a tax exemption if IRA funds are issued directly from the IRA to the charity. 2007 may be your last chance to take advantage of this exemption. If you would like to learn more, contact Craig Stirtz at Lutheran Planned Services cstirtz@lpgs.org, 1-888-891-5728 or your professional advisor as soon as possible to ensure you have enough time to complete the gift before December 31.

Lutheran Pantry in Omaha

The Lutheran Pantry is supported by congregations, individuals, and grants. It is used to provide food for needy families throughout the Omaha area and is the largest denominational system in the city.

In addition we also work to provide support to Together Emergency Relief Services, the ecumenical pantry system.

The only difference between a rut
and a grave is the depth.



News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



170 years of Service to the Lord between them!

This picture was taken at the reception for Gertrude's 99th birthday at Grace on November 11, 2007.

Left - Jack Williams age 91, born in September of 1916 to member, Carrie Neef Williams and her husband, James R. Williams. Jack was baptized on December 30, 1917 at Grace. Jack is the oldest in terms of membership; 90 years worshipping at Grace.

Right - Gertrude Hufford age 99, born in November of 1908 in Gretna, NE joined with her family, the Olderogs' in 1927. Gertrude is the oldest in terms of age at 99 yrs. She has been a member at Grace for 80 years.

"Thank you dear friends, for making my 99th birthday a delightful celebration. The many cards received were wonderful and the messages were beautiful. I am happy you are all a part of my life at Grace Lutheran Church.

God bless all of you.

Gratefully,

Gertrude Hufford

He who is truly born of God is sure to resemble his Father." anonymous



The friends and family of Grace Lutheran Church are invited to celebrate Bob Moss's 80th birthday at a cake reception after worship on Sunday December 16th.

Cards only, please.

Four Faithful Females!

Left to Right - Brenda Spahr, Andrea Spahr, Mary Laaker and Eva Martin at the Crop Walk, chugging along to fight hunger around the world. (Is that a plastic bag on Eva's head? Very practical, Eva!!)

Thanks to all the folks who sponsored walkers and to the folks who put the rubber to the road!



Grace Lutheran
Church Raised
\$465.00
for World Hunger



Joining Together in Worship, Fellowship and Service



Joint Thanksgiving Service/Wheeler Memorial Presbyterian
Above - Gertrude and David (Hufford) picking out dessert at the Fellowship after the service on November 21st.



Habitat for Humanity Home/Neighbor's South Coalition; Grace Lutheran is part of the Coalition.

Top Right - Pastor Laaker handing the keys to the new homeowners, Isidro & Carol Hernandez and family.

Right - The Isidro Hernandez family home at 28th and Madison.



Muchas Gracias!

Can you believe it? December is here and I have unfinished business from *October* to take care of. That's how life is for me. I'm always running behind, and I find myself continually asking God to give me some energy and drive to get things done.



This is pretty typical for me, so I *can* believe it. Still, it shouldn't go unsaid, **Thanks to everyone** for your support and help at this year's Halloween Party.

Just like this note, I was running behind on plans and preparation for the party this year. Remarkably, with God's help through our generous members, the party came off wonderfully well. I feel blessed that I can count you, God's servants, to participate for the good of the cause. If you have never attended our Halloween party, it's an incredible, fast paced few hours of fun for families here at Grace and families in our neighborhood. We play games, eat popcorn and cookies, and get to enjoy creative costumes worn by all ages. It's great fellowship for kids and adults alike.

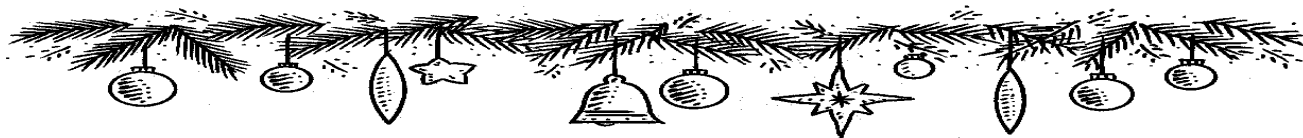
Compliments to all the workers for being so efficient taking on the tasks at hand, including whirlwind decorating and set up the evening before the party, judging the costumes (this is a really hard task), officiating games, selling tickets and serving our guests. I hope I wasn't *too* bossy. Margie and Brian thanked me for the super job we did on clean up. It's amazing how many bottles of pop for the Ring Toss, candy for the Candy Dash and attractively decorated cakes for the Cake walk magically appear the day of the party. I could go on, but

Please know that I truly thank *everyone* for the roles you played to make the annual party a success. I'm looking forward to next October already!

Janet Hula
Halloween Party Coordinator



Merry Christmas!
Feliz Navidad!
From Your Interfaith Director
and Staff.



Greetings from Interfaith Health Service! I have shared a few stories about the Interfaith and Douglas County Health Department's "Super Kids Youth Club" over the summer months, a club that over 100 youth participated in at various stages.

One of our participants, Rosa, was an outstanding leader and assistant in the program. Since the program was new and we had more participants than expected, Rosa functioned as my assistant in the program. She is also an excellent artist and writer who shared some of her work with me with the other program participants. I asked her to summarize her experience with the youth club and the reasons her mom is so dedicated to taking part in Interfaith's Latinas In Action classes. Her article is below. It illustrates, I think, the reasons to give thanks that our programs are thriving. In this season of giving thanks, I am also thankful for the congregation members who support Interfaith by opening their doors, welcoming participants, helping with program planning, set up and clean up, and by keeping Interfaith lifted up in prayer.

Virginia McGill, Interfaith

**My Experience with Latinas En Accion by
Rosa Vans Vasquez, Age 15, sophomore student, South High School**

Me: "Why do you come to Latinas En Accion?"

My mom: "To be healthy and learn how to keep my body healthy and in shape. Plus, your sister and you can come along for the Super Kids Club."

Me: "Do you enjoy the workout?"

My mom: "Yes, very much! And I learn how to keep my family healthy with the new recipes Gema has given all the women here."

When I first heard my mother talk about going to an aerobics class, I thought it might be fun. I decided to join her at the church where it was held. Once we arrived, everyone got down to losing those extra pounds and since my mom and I were new, we didn't know the steps. But somehow, my mom got through it. I was just all mixed up. When the instructor said to "go left and clap", for some reason unknown, I would go right and not clap. So, eventually, I gave up and sat down. When I was sitting, I saw how the women really enjoyed the work out. You could see it in their faces. When they were finished my mom was drenched in sweat, but smiling happily. She had made some new friends and that was the first time she had ever been to the Latinas En Accion class. Goes to show you they know what action is!

Continued on next page

From The Editor



Move Me Closer!

A Shepherd's Prayer

Tw'as the night before Christmas,
And my only desire
Was peace among kids, and to rest by the fire.
I had just settled down in my favorite chair;
When I heard a small voice, and a cry of despair.
As I stared at the hearth I saw a strange sight!
Our nativity scene, in the flickering light
Seemed almost alive and how could this be!
One lonely shepherd was calling to me.

**Move me closer, move me closer
Move me closer to the Child.
Let me see Him, let me hold His hand.
Move me closer to the Child.**

As you can well imagine, I was a bit surprised.
So with a shake of the head and a rub of the eyes
I took another look, and what did I see,
Without a doubt he was looking at me.

It seems in the hustle and bustle of things In the
wrapping of gifts, and the building of swings, In
assembling his scene, I'd been a bit hurried, and
understandably so, He was a little bit worried.

You see, candy canes and holly trim didn't mean a
thing to him. If it kept him from his post beside the
child he loved the most.

So as strange as it must seem, Whether it was, or
wasn't, a dream. I placed him back where he be-
longed As he sang again his simple song. And now
when we at Christmas share, We sing his song:
A Shepherd's Prayer.

**Move me closer, move me closer
Move me closer to the Child.
Let me see Him, let me hold His hand.
Move me closer to the Child.
Move me closer to the Child.**

*Lyrics and Melody by Evie from
"Come on Ring Those Bells" Album*

We are beginning a season that, for many of us, signals a frantic upsweep in things to do and close deadlines. As I contemplated the list of items to be completed before the end of the year and beyond, I felt off balance. I wanted calm and peacefulness. I wanted to feel safe and stress free. There wasn't as much joy and excitement in my heart as I wanted there to be. Because thoughts of lost loved ones always crowd in during the holiday season, dread and feelings of expected exhaustion filled my mind. It was not a peaceful place to be.

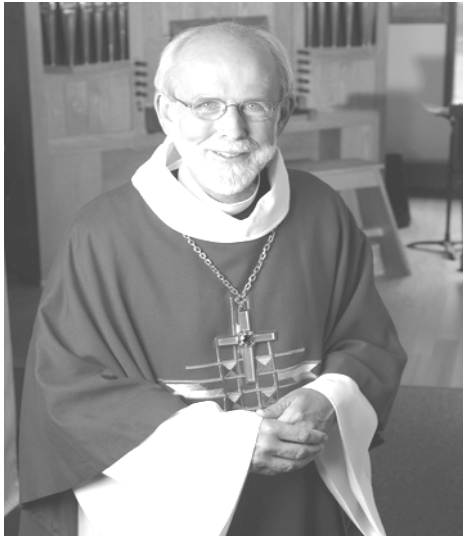
I spent some time in prayer asking God to renew in me a positive and joyful spirit. The words, "Move Me Closer" came to mind. Usually if a phrase, a Bible verse or a snippet of song pops up after prayer, I investigate what it might mean in my circumstances, knowing that if I've truly opened my heart to Him, He will supply an answer. I recognized this as a song I had heard many years ago and spent time finding the words on the internet.

It's a precious little song about a nativity figure, a shepherd, who doesn't think he's been placed close enough to the Christ Child in the diorama.

I knew as soon as I read it that God was trying to tell me that I hadn't placed myself close enough to Him...that the longing for simplicity and peace would only come if I changed my attitude about letting Him be near instead of pushing forward with all the frantic activities of Christmas. He didn't want me that far away. "Come closer, dearest. I want to bring you tidings of comfort and joy. I want you to know Me, to trust Me and to love Me. Come closer, Come closer."

I'm going to make an pledge to God this Christmas. I want to move closer by changing my attitude, by praying and listening, and by spending time alone with Him. Will you pledge that, too?

Pam Reents, editor



Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

**Bishop Mark S. Hanson's
Christmas Message 2007**

*"Now the birth of Jesus
the Messiah
took place in this way..."*

(Matthew 1:18).

Many generations after God promised a Messiah, a young girl named Mary conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, the young man to whom she was betrothed, was told by an angel that the child she would bear was God's Son, Jesus.

God's power and blessing worked through common lives to bring forth Jesus the Messiah. Joseph and Mary, ordinary young adults nurtured by the generations before them, were open to God's extraordinary activity in their lives. They were common people whose willing hearts and courage powerfully proclaimed the Good News of the one who would save his people from their sins.

Countless generations later, you and I are called to proclaim the Good News of Emmanuel, "God with us." Our neighborhoods, our communities, and our world are filled with those who long to know Jesus' love and saving presence in their lives. God uses us in all our ordinariness and sinfulness to bring forth the promise and light of Christ's love and salvation.

This Christmas, may the Holy Spirit give you faith, courage, and a willing heart as you take part in God's ongoing miracle. May you know the joy and awe that comes from bearing Christ's creative and redeeming love to the world.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Christmas Prayer
by Johanna Fuchs

Dear Lord, as we celebrate Your birth, let us remember that You are the true reason for Christmas. Let every sparkling light remind us how You illuminate our lives, a shining beacon to guide us in our thoughts and actions each day, and how You light us from within in the knowledge of Your love and truth. Let the Christmas trees, standing straight, tall unbowed, remind us of Your uprightness, Your goodness, Your perfection and Your refusal to bow to worldly temptations, no matter how great the challenge or trouble. Lord, as we feast on Christmas treats, let us remember that You are the sole provider of everything worth having, that all good things come from You. And as we enjoy our gifts, let us never forget that You are the greatest gift of all--our wonderful Savior, Counselor, Giver of an eternal life whose wonders we cannot imagine. So as we delight in Christmas, the happiest and brightest of holidays, let us remember there would be no Christmas without You, Lord, and let us our hearts be filled with joy, and love and thankfulness, this Christmas and the ones to come. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.



Merry Christmas

More “Merry Christmas” and Less “Happy Holidays”

Reminder for the Season

“It’s called “Christmas,”

What more can I say

It’s about the birth of Christ and you can’t take that away.

You can call it something else but that’s not what it will be.

It’s Called “Christmas” with a capital C!”

From the Go Fish Guys Children’s CD “go fish SNOW”

Let’s intentionally Keep Christ in our Christmas celebrations!

Special Days at Grace

December 2 - Holiday Tour Site from 5-7

December 4 - On Being Lutheran Study

December 9 - Rejoice Lutheran

Choir Cantata

December 13 - Prayer Service

December 16 - Grace Choir Advent Festival

December 18 - Women’s Lunch at Piccolo’s

December 24 - Christmas Eve Worship

at 4:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

at 11:00 p.m.

What did the reindeer
say before launching
into his comedy routine?

This will sleigh you.



What is the purpose of reindeer?

It makes the grass grow, sweetie.

One Christmas, Joe and Peter
built a skating rink in the mid-
dle of a field. A shepherd lead-
ing his flock decided to take a
shortcut across the rink. The
sheep, however, were afraid of
the ice and wouldn't cross it. Desperate, the shep-
herd began tugging them to the other side.

'Look at that, 'remarked Peter to Joe, 'That guy is
trying to pull the wool over our ice!'



Good King Wenceslas phoned
for a pizza.

The salesgirl asked him,
'Do you want your usual?
Deep pan, crisp and even?'

O (Blonde) Christmas Tree



Two blondes went deep into the frozen
woods searching for a Christmas tree. After
hours of subzero temperatures and a few
close calls with hungry wolves, one blonde
turned to the other and said,
"I'm chopping down the next tree I see. I
don't care whether it's decorated or not!"

'He who has no Christmas in his heart will never
find Christmas under a tree.'

- Anon.



Christmas Carols for the Challenged

SCHIZOPHRENIA - Do You Hear What I Hear?

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY - We Three Kings Disoriented Are.

DEMENTIA - I Think I'll Be Home For Christmas.

NARCISSISTIC - Hark The Herald Angels Sing (About Me)

MANIA - Deck the Halls and Walls and House and Lawn and Streets and Stores and Office and Town ... or Deck the Halls and Spare No Expense!

PARANOIA - Santa Claus is Coming To Get Me.

PERSONALITY DISORDER - You Better Watch Out, I'm Gonna Cry, I'm Gonna Pout, then MAYBE I'll tell you why.

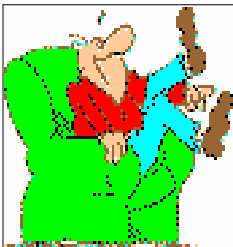
DEPRESSION - Silent anhedonia*, Holy anhedonia. All is calm, All is pretty lonely.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE - Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell, Jingle Bell Rock, Jingle Bell...

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY - Thoughts of Roasting in an Open Fire.

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE - On the First Day of Christmas My True Love Gave to Me (and then took it all away).

**Anhedonia is the inability to gain pleasure from enjoyable experiences. They can't react properly or feel anything. There is no variation of mood, making it difficult to take things forward.*



A husband looking through the paper came upon a study that said women use more words than men.

It read, "Men use about 15,000 words per day, but women use 30,000."

Excited to prove to his wife that he had been right all along when he accused her of talking too much, he showed her the study results.

The wife thought for a while, then finally she said to her husband, "It's because we have to repeat everything we say."

The husband said, "What?"



How do you know Santa has to be a man?

No woman is going to wear the same outfit year after year



The next evening of the class, I decided to go to the children's room to help out with the kids because to tell the truth I'm not physically coordinated. I met and had so much fun helping and playing with all the little kids. My little sister, Martha, who is 4 years old, was also in the room. It was fun to see her interact with the other children.

Later on in the program, I heard that Virginia would be starting a summer program for kids 6 and over. I decided to join in on the fun even though I would be the oldest, being 15 and all. The first day of the program we were learning about the human body, our bones, and the names of every individual bone. Before that, I did not know that the smallest bone in our bodies was the one between our jaws and ears.

All the kids had fun and every day was an adventure, but we never forgot to somehow include running. The kids loved to run. They also had so much fun with another experiment we did with Mentos candy and a two-liter of pop. The kids were stunned when they saw the chemical reaction between the Mentos and pop. It made the pop fly up in the air. Every day after that experiment, they would ask if we could do that one over again.

Soccer was one of the games we never forgot to play. When we had no idea what to do, soccer was the answer. We would walk down to the park and play soccer, or play it in front of Grace Church. Some of the few days I wasn't able to make it to the Super Kids Club, they went to the public pool, bowling, and to the park. When the kids saw me all they could talk about was how much fun they had. I'm glad that at night it is still going on because the kids keep showing up even now that school has started. It is such an awesome, terrific, incredible program to me. It's a never-ending adventure. Everyday there is someone new to see in what my mom and I call our second family, Latinas En Accion and the Super Kids Club.

Thank you Latinas En Accion!
Gracias, Interfaith!
Vans Vasquez



FAITH
IN ACTION

It seems hard to believe that 2007 is coming to a close. As we look back upon the year, it is with much thankfulness that we reflect upon the Faith in Action program. We've been making a difference in the lives of many people in our community. What a joy it is to see the program really beginning to grow!

Thank you for your support, your prayers and your talents.

As always, we welcome your ideas and input for the program. Please feel free to contact us at 660-2652 or e-mail at faithinaction2005@hotmail.com.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy and Healthy New Year!

Julie, Olga and Blanca