



The EAGLE CALL

Volume 44, Number 12
December, 2012

Worship

Saturday

5:00 pm

Sunday

7:45 am
8:45 am
11:00 am

Radio Broadcast

KRNT 1350 AM
Sunday Mornings
8:30 am

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December Services Familiar, Comforting, Healing



There can be no question that December ushers in one of the most anticipated and beloved seasons of the church year: the Advent, Christmas, Epiphany cycle. While the elements are familiar, it seems they never become boring, and we plunge into the observances hoping our hearts will be healed and opened.

Sunday morning Advent services on Dec. 2, 9 and 16 at 8:45 and 11 a.m., will feature traditional elements: a gathering rite with a liturgical dancer and a child bearing a candle from which the Advent wreath is lighted. And, of course, the annual Children's Advent Program will be presented between services on Dec. 16 at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary.

On the Sundays of Dec. 23 (Advent IV) and Dec. 30 (the First Sunday of Christmas), there will be only one service – each at 10 a.m. – due to the nearness of Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

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In the City for Good!
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Monday – Thursday
 9:00 am – 5:00 p.m.,
 4:00 p.m. Friday
 Saturday
 9:00 am – 12:00 p.m.

Next Eagle Call Deadline
December 17 at 12 p.m.



A Word from Our Pastors

Pastor Rachel Thorson Mithelman

My dear friends,

I have to admit that over the course of my ministry, the seasons of Advent & Christmas have often been the most challenging seasons of the church year for me. I can identify some of the reasons for this: the long hours of darkness often affect my emotional health; the prevailing culture's definition of Christmas - which we so often accept without question - has disturbingly little to do with the wonder

of the Incarnation; and the story around which we gather in worship is so familiar that it is very difficult to proclaim it in such a way that you hear it anew - *really* hear how scandalous and wondrous it is! ...Given these challenges, I have discovered over the years that I often tell the story of Christ's birth through another story, an everyday story that serves as something of an icon, an image, through which you may receive a glimpse of the Divine Love...

As we enter into the Advent and Christmas seasons this year, let me share two short stories with you that speak of the Christ Child as God's great *kindness* shown to a sinful world.

The first is a story I heard long ago from another pastor... A little boy was brought to the emergency room of a hospital after having been beaten by his father. The child's injuries were serious enough to require hospitalization for the sake of treatment, healing, and safety. One evening, after a nursing assistant had helped the boy get settled for the night, she ruffled his hair, told him to go right to sleep, and - as she did with her own children - bent down and kissed him on the cheek. The boy looked up at her and said, "What was that?" "What was what?" she asked. "What you just did - what was that?" She looked at him and said, "I gave you a kiss goodnight." "Oh..." the boy said quietly, "that is what a kiss is." ...The child had never been kissed! That broken little body received a *kindness* in that kiss that it had never known, *just as this broken world and our broken lives have received God's great kindness in God's gift of the Christ child, God's "kiss" shared with the whole creation.*

The other story that serves as an icon of sorts for me, revealing the *kindness* of our God, is from my own experience...In December of 1985 I was in my ninth month of pregnancy with our son. I was a walking Advent sermon illustration, to be sure, but I was also anxious, and I longed for the wisdom and encouragement of my mother who had died 18 months previous. But I received two phone calls that month, both late in the afternoon, which eased my fear and strengthened my spirit. One call was from Gunda Ruplinger, age 85 or so, and the other from Viola Hoffman, almost 90 - both of them mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers at the time. The conversation was basically the same. "Hello?" "Hello, Pastor Rachel, it's Gunda/Viola. I was just thinking about you today, and I wanted to know how you are getting along. Are you okay?"... Just two simple, brief phone calls, but I remember them clearly 27 years later because they were acts of such *kindness*. In a community where I was not particularly welcome, where a pastor having a baby was not only unheard of but disturbing to some, Gunda & Viola proved to be my "Elizabeth's," (see Luke 1:39ff.) extending a tender and gracious love to an anxious, soon-to-be-mother. *Their kindness in tending to me on those dark December afternoons was a glimpse of God's kindness shown to us in Christ in the darkness of this world.* They neither judged or condemned me; rather, they reached out to me to create a small circle of caring community, just as God chose to reach out to us - alienated from God and one another by sin - to create community with us forever through the child of Bethlehem.

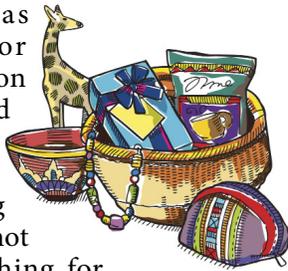
In the midst of these busy days, I will be praying that you receive some everyday glimpses of God's immense *kindness* shown to us in the gift of the Christ child. And when you do, tell someone about it, for many are yearning to know that God's *kindness* is for them, as well.

Peace be with you.

Fair Trade Fair

Fair Trade Fair Set for Dec. 8-9

Do your Christmas shopping before or after church services on Saturday, Dec. 8, and Sunday, Dec. 9, by visiting the St. John's Fair Trade Fair. Buying through Fair Trade is not only acquiring something for yourself or family or friends; it is also a gift for the low-income artisan who crafted your product. It gives you the opportunity to change lives for the better by helping someone physically or emotionally or by sending children to school.



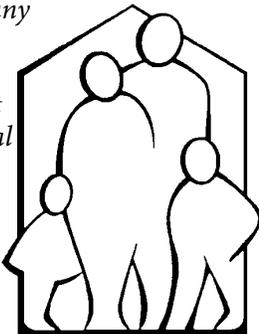
The Global Mission Ministry Team has ordered Fair Trade products on consignment from Lutheran World Relief. Crafts will be for sale in the west lounge before and after the Saturday, Dec. 8, evening service and on Sunday, Dec. 9, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A large assortment of items will be available – jewelry, scarves, hand bags, ornaments, baskets, wooden boxes and trays. Each handicraft is guaranteed authentic and individually made.

So bring your cash or checkbook (charge cards cannot be used) to church the weekend of Dec. 8-9, and get your Christmas shopping done. A small percentage of every purchase is donated to Lutheran World Relief to further their mission to end poverty, injustice and human suffering. Your gift will be a three-fold blessing: to your loved one, to the artisan and to the poor around the world.

Interfaith Hospitality

Opportunity for an Epiphany

Epiphany: Sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into the reality, the essential meaning of something.



Individuals who assist with the Interfaith Hospitality Network often are taken aback when they realize the reality of the daily lives of homeless families in transition.

On Tuesday, Jan. 8, and Thursday, Jan. 10, St. John's

will host the Interfaith Hospitality Network families at Windsor Heights Lutheran Church. We need help with preparing and serving supper, cleanup and hosting the guests by providing overnight support, including:

- Supper for 10 to 15. This includes a main dish (lasagna for Tuesday and a casserole for Thursday), salad or vegetable, starch or bread, and dessert. These can be delivered to the parsonage just west of Windsor Heights Lutheran any time after 4:30 p.m.; the side door should be open.
- Two people to host the 5 to 8 p.m. shift.
- Two individuals to host the overnight shift, which is 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. Beds are provided, however, **BRING A SLEEPING BAG OR BLANKETS AND PILLOW.**

Please sign up on the sheet posted in the Narthex (the area used to enter the Sanctuary).

This is an excellent opportunity for small groups or families to provide food and fellowship for homeless families with children. If you have questions, call Jennifer Early at 274-6872.

Cover Story Continued

Three services will be offered on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 (The Nativity of Our Lord):

- **5 p.m. is the Children's Service** with a dramatic interpretation of the Nativity story, Kisasa singing and ringing bells and a live "Baby Jesus." This service lasts only about 45 minutes and is truly child friendly.
- **8:30 p.m. is Candlelight Communion**, a full Eucharistic Christmas Eve Mass of the Christ Child. Pre-service music begins at 8 p.m.; alternating brass quintet and handbell selections return to brighten our Christmas Eve celebration!
- **11 p.m. is our Candlelight Carol Service** with organ, choir and full orchestra – truly the only service of its kind in Des Moines on Christmas Eve – one that many in the region return to again and again, because it simply does not feel like Christmas without it.

10 a.m. Christmas morning is a simple service of word and sacrament: Christmas hymns and carols serve as assembly song and liturgy with sermon and communion creating a beautiful, restful, centering way to enter into your Christmas observance.

For those wondering if there will be "stars in the sky" over your heads again, you won't be disappointed!



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E-mail businessoffice@stjohnsdsm.org and request the eEagle Call. Help us save on the cost of postage, use less paper, and see each issue in **FULL COLOR.**

Prepare for Worship

The Gathering Rite throughout Advent will include a rhythmic, processional invocation with a liturgical dancer and a child bringing in the flame for lighting the Advent Wreath candles. The Penitential Rite, an Advent-specific Kyrie, will follow.

Sunday, Dec. 2 First Sunday of Advent

Advent is about the "coming days." God's people have lived in great expectation, but that expectation finds specific, repeated enunciation in the texts appointed for these four weeks. The ancients anticipated a "righteous Branch to spring up for David." The Thessalonians awaited "the coming of our Lord Jesus with all the saints." Our Lord's contemporaries hoped for the time "to stand before the Son of Man." With them we eagerly await the coming days: another Christmas celebration, a second coming, and the advent of our Lord in word and supper.

The readings are Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10, 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 and Luke 21:25-36. The hymns will be ELW 260, "The King Shall Come," ELW 259, "Fling Wide the Door," and

ELW 441, "Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand." At 8:45 a.m. Kiasa and Joyful Noise will sing and play Orff instruments on "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus," and the High School Handbells will ring during offering. At 11 a.m. the St. John's Choir and Chamber Orchestra will perform portions of *Machet di Tore weit* (Let all the gates be raised.) by G.F. Telemann.

Sunday, Dec. 9 Second Sunday of Advent

Forerunners and messengers advance the advent of our God. While John the Baptizer's voice in the wilderness may be the principal focus of the day, Malachi's prophesy could as easily herald the coming Lord Jesus as forerunner of the Lord of hosts. Finally, all baptised are called to participate in the sharing of the gospel. In so doing, we prepare the way for the coming of the Lord and assist all flesh in capturing a vision of the "salvation of God."

The readings are Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79, Philippians 1:3-11 and Luke 3:1-6. The hymns will be ELW 264, "Prepare the Royal Highway," ELW 249, "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry," and ELW 250, "Blessed be the God of Israel." At 8:45 a.m. the Adult Handbell Choir will ring during offering. At 11 a.m. the St. John's Choir will sing "People, Look East" in a setting by William M. Schoenfeld. During communion at both 8:45 and 11 a.m., the assembly will join in singing the Taize chant, "Wait for the Lord."

Sunday, Dec. 16 Third Sunday of Advent (Children's Advent Program at 10 a.m.)

The presence of the Lord "in your midst" in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the Lord in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with this winnowing fork in his hand, is good news – and cause for exultation – for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

The readings are Zephaniah 3:14-20, Isaiah 12:2-6, Philippians 4:4-7 and Luke 3:7-18. The hymns will be ELW 241, "O Lord, How Shall I Meet You," ELW 253, "He Came Down," and

ELW 266, "All Earth is Hopeful." At 8:45 a.m. the St. John's Choir will sing the Finnish folk song, "Lost in the Night," in the famous F.M. Christiansen arrangement.

Sunday, Dec. 23 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Saturday chapel service at 5 p.m. One Sunday service at 10 a.m.

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and the Blessed Virgin Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as in the Holy Communion – with high delight – "we proclaim the Lord's death."

The readings are Micah 5:2-5a, Psalm 80:1-7, Hebrews 10:5-10 and Luke 1:39-55. The hymns will be ELW 258, "Unexpected and Mysterious," ELW 247, "Come Now, O Prince of Peace," and ELW 248, "People, Look East." During offering the St. John's Choir and the assembly will sing Marty Haugen's "My Soul Proclaims."

**For Christmas Eve and Christmas Day information
please see this issue's cover story**

Sunday, Dec. 30 First Sunday of Christmas

A 5 p.m. Saturday service will be held as well as a single 10 a.m. service on Sunday.



Audio Sermons

Now available at
stjohnsdsm.org or
subscribe on iTunes.

Finding Hope

November Conference Finds Hope for the Hungry

About 150 people gathered at St. John's on Nov. 10 for the fourth annual Hope for the Hungry conference. In his keynote address, "What Does Childhood Hunger Look Like?" Yogesh Shah, M.D., described the adverse health consequences of poor childhood nutrition, beginning in the womb.

Dr. Shah encourages breastfeeding infants, and then providing good childhood nutrition that feeds not only the body, but the brain, which won't fully develop if a child's diet lacks necessary nutrients. Dr. Shah advocates a diet rich in fish, vegetables and fruits, including fruits as snacks.

Dr. Shah, a warm and engaging person, sprinkled his speech with infectious and sometimes self-deprecating humor. His informative speech inspired participants and set the stage for three breakout discussion sessions about what childhood hunger looks like at school, in the home and for the community. Participants and field experts began honing in on the 2013 goals to help alleviate childhood hunger in greater Des Moines by 2015. When finalized, these goals will be posted on coalitioninsupportofhungrychildren.blogspot.com.

The Board of Directors of the Bridge provided and served a delicious lunch at the conference and collected a free-will offering of \$1,080 for the Connection Cafe. Our own Judy and Phil Latessa provided the ingredients, and Judy cooked, assisted by St. John's member Arlene Field. During lunch the room buzzed with enthusiastic conversations as participants exchanged ideas and shared practical experience and contact information.

At the end of the day, Diana Sickles encouraged participants to join or continue the work toward the 2015 goal. They were asked: "What are you going to do differently, based on [what you learned] today?" Here are some of the answers:

- "Try to develop more leaders for school gardens and develop continuity in leadership."
- "I'm going to plant the seed of a community garden at church."
- "Plan to work on improving the quality of food in our backpack program in West Marshall."
- "Help [make] the summer meal program accessible to kids."

- "Educate others [about] DMARC, Backpack Buddies and support all I'm able to."

Diana Sickles, as founder of the Coalition in Support of Hungry Children and lead planner of Hope for the Hungry, declared the day a "huge success" with sessions that were "full of energy." Since the conference, she's had many offers to "count me in."

"We're already beginning to plan something big for next year – our fifth Hope for the Hungry gathering," Diana says. "Because of Dr. Shah's address, and one of our exhibitors being the World Food Prize (WFP) organization, the WFP has already spoken with Dr. Shah about next year's WFP to incorporate his remarks in their planning. They have already invited him to be one of the presenters during the October 2013 symposium."

Many St. John's members attended the conference. Several days later, one said, "Awesome meeting. I'm still energized."

The Coalition is grateful to St. John's for the wonderful conference facilities and especially appreciate the services of staff members Scott LaBlanc, Kim Lamb and Les Moeller. St. John's members who helped with hospitality and contributed baked goods were very helpful: Sue Tew Warming and Women of the ELCA Margaret Townsend, Nancy Budrevich, Carol Dittmer and Kathy Kroll. And our thanks to Pastor Rachel Thorson Mithelman for her many hospitable acts during the conference, from providing a cooling fan for Dr. Shah to pouring beverages in the lunch line.

Thank you all.
Bonnie Ekse

Faithful Friends

Faithful Friends and Stephen's Ministers recently determined that the St. John's community needs more volunteers to visit our growing number of homebound members, so a meeting will be held Sunday, Jan. 13, 2013, at 10 a.m. in Neumann Hall for those who are interested in exploring this ministry. It will be a time to look at our needs and possible ways to serve.

Some of our homebound only receive an occasional pastoral visit. While current volunteers agreed to visit additional members. St. John's still needs more people to serve our homebound and those who rarely are able to get out. Some of St. John's homebound members only have a few relatives who live locally, while others have no one in town to visit them. The options are many: solo visits, husband/wife teams, parent child pairings, teams of friends, etc. Visits could be on a regular schedule all year, part of a year or just, during a particular season, such as Christmas. Training will be provided to those who decide to become Faithful Friends to St. John's homebound members.

Blessings,
Pastor Gene Anderson
part-time visitation pastor

Small Groups

Questions? Contact Darla Stiles, Small Groups Coordinator
243.7691 or darlastiles@stjohnsdsm.org

CALENDAR

Saturday Morning Bible Study: Saturdays, Dec. 1, 8 and 15, 8:30 a.m.; locations to be announced. Contacts are Ellen Fisher, ellenfisher123@gmail.com, or Rod Snavelly, rsnavely@aol.com.

Zumba: Monday, Dec. 3, 5 to 5:45 p.m., third-floor multi-purpose room at church. Licensed Zumba teacher. Free. Contact Darla at darlastiles@stjohnsdsm.org.

Quilting: Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m., Room 308 at church.

St. John's Social Club: Sunday, Dec. 9, 3:30 p.m., Baratta's; caroling and dinner. Contact Jean and Bob Williams, 277-9120 or rwilli1195@aol.com, or Karen and Wes Ritchie, 279-0153 or kritchiel@me.com.

WIRED Book Discussion: Monday, Dec. 10, 5:30 p.m., Smokey Row.

Hardanger: Wednesday, Dec. 12, 9 a.m., Neumann Hall at church.

St. John's Networking: Monday, Dec. 17, at 5:30 p.m. at Gateway Market, Des Moines.

Lunch Bunch II: Wednesday, Dec. 19, 12:30 a.m.

Recreational Reading: Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 4:30 p.m., Rose Holm.

Lunch Bunch I: Thursday, Dec. 20, 11:30 a.m.

WIRED groups: Watch bulletin announcements for upcoming dates and information.

EAGLES: Tuesday, Dec. 11, at 11 a.m., World Food Prize Building and Veterans Memorial Auditorium guided tours. Lunch: Court Avenue Brewing Company. RSVP to Garnet Schlievert, 277-6309.

Photography: No meetings in December.

Keep up to date with all events by subscribing to our weekly email newsletter (sign up on the homepage of our website) or keep an eye on www.stjohnsdsm.org

MORE INFORMATION

Saturday Morning Bible Study will meet Saturdays, Dec. 1, 8 and 15, at 8:30 a.m. at locations to be announced. (We will not meet Dec. 22 or 29.) Contact Ellen Fisher at ellenfisher123@gmail.com or Rod Snavelly at rsnavely@aol.com.

Zumba Classes are going great! We will meet once this month, on Monday, Dec. 3, from 5 to 5:45 p.m., and then the group will take a break until after the first of the year. Classes are held in the third-floor multi-purpose room at St. John's. All are welcome. There is no charge for this class, so please invite your friends.

St. John's Social Club will meet Saturday, Dec. 9, at 3:30 p.m. at Baratta's for dinner and caroling. For information, contact Jean and Bob Williams, 277-9120 or rwilli1195@aol.com, or Karen and Wes Ritchie, 279-0153 or kritchiel@me.com.

Quilting Group meets Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. in Room 308 at church. Anyone is welcome who is interested in quilting, tying or learning how.

WIRED Book Discussion will meet Monday, Dec. 10, at 5:30 p.m. at Smokey Row Coffee House in Des Moines to discuss *Same Kind of Different As Me*, by Ron Hall and Denver Moore. We also might have dinner together. If you can join us, RSVP to Karen Zaabel at KZaabel@msn.com.

Hardanger will meet Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 9 a.m. in Neumann Hall at church. If you are interested, contact Arlene Field at fjeldt@q.com.

St. John's Networking will meet on the third Monday of the month, Dec. 17, at 5:30 p.m. at Gateway Market in Des Moines. If you can join us, contact Ellen Fisher at ellenfisher123@gmail.com.

Lunch Bunch II will meet Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 12:30 a.m. If you are interested in joining this group, contact Janet Figg at 279-6326.

Recreational Reading will gather Wednesday, Dec. 19, at 4:30 p.m. in Rose Holm at church. The book we will discuss is *On the Island, A Novel*, by Tracy Garvis Graves.

Lunch Bunch I will meet Thursday, Dec. 20, at 11:30 a.m. New members are most welcome! Anyone who is interested in joining the group should reserve a space by calling Margaret Roby at 288-6304.

EAGLES will receive a guided tour of the World Food Prize Building and Veterans Memorial Auditorium on Tuesday, Dec. 11, at 11 a.m. Following the tour, the group will enjoy lunch at the Court Avenue Brewing Company. To RSVP, call Garnet Schlievert at 277-6309.

WIRED Yoga will take a break until after the first of the year.

WIRED gatherings for 2013 have a theme of "In the City for Good," so we have named our Jan. 27, 12:30 p.m., luncheon and gathering, "In the City for Service." We will hear speakers from two service organizations, InSight (kids aging out of foster care) and Lighthouse (women who recently had babies and have no place to live). Lunch and speakers will be in Weertz Fellowship Hall. Mark the date on your 2013 calendars now!

Women of the ELCA

Donate to Women, Children at New Directions Shelter

The Women of the ELCA have New Directions, a shelter for women and children, as their outreach project for December. The congregation is invited to participate by contributing Christmas gifts that mothers and children can give to each other. The children are between 2-months and 14-years-old (the majority of them are ages 4 to 9).



Some suggestions are scarves, gloves, mittens, pajamas, bath towels, body lotion, Play Dough, crayons, coloring and activity books, educational toys and gift cards for Walmart or Hy-Vee. They will be given the opportunity to choose a gift and wrap it. We need the donations **by Saturday, Dec. 15**, if possible, so they will have adequate time to wrap the gifts before Christmas. Look for the marked boxes in the narthex and near the office reception area.

Thanks for Your Help!

We want to thank everyone who donated to Lutheran Services of Iowa in November.

Christmas Lights and Pull Tabs Collected for Good Samaritan Fund

The Women of the ELCA are collecting unwanted Christmas lights to recycle for our Good Samaritan Fund. There will be a bin in the office area where you can drop off your donations. Also, please save your pull tabs for the same fund.

Cookie Walk Canceled

The Women of the ELCA will not have a Cookie Walk this year. Unfortunately, we do not have enough members to make this a successful event.

Monthly Meetings

Group meetings will be Thursday, Dec. 6:

- Lois group will meet at 12:30 p.m. in Neumann Hall at church.
- Sarah group will meet at 9:30 a.m. in the home of Jean Williams.

Johanna Scholarship



Johanna Scholarship recipients Angella Shadrack, Rhoda Nathanael, Natujwa Yonah and Leah Paul.

Update on Our Scholarship Recipients

In July 2011, women of St. John's established the Johanna Scholarship to be used by Tanzanian women in the Pare Diocese who would like to attend the Usangi Leadership and Training College to prepare for a career in church work. St. John's member Judy Langholz is a board member of Usangi College and prepared this report about her latest visit to Usangi.

I was privileged to meet with our Johanna Scholarship recipients on my trip to the Usangi Leadership and Training College in Tanzania this past October. Rhoda Nathanael and Leah Paul are beginning their second year of study and have grown in the last year in confidence and knowledge. Leah took one term off to have a baby, but she will have the opportunity to make up this work.

Our two first-year students are Angella and Natujwa. Here's some background on them:

Angella Shadrack, from Kiangare, is a widow with two boys, ages 15 and 4. She is studying to become an evangelist, a person of the parish who preaches and leads the congregation on the weeks when the pastor is traveling to other sub-parishes. She is quiet and studious.

Natujwa Yonah is from the area around Usangi, called Mareti. She has a very good knowledge of English and wants to pass on her thanks and God's blessings to all at St. Johns. She eventually would like to be a pastor. Natujwa did not grow up as a Christian; she came to the religion as an adult. She is married and has three children, who are 18-, 14- and 3-years-old. She boards at the college during the week but lives close enough to go home on the weekend.

All of our students are very thankful for the immense gift St. John's has provided – an education in church work. They would not be able to go to school without our assistance.

Judi Langholz

Children's Ministries

Children's Advent Program

The Children's Advent Program will be Sunday, Dec. 16, at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary. Advent hymns and songs, along with Bible readings and reflections, will be shared during the program.

Why Do We Have an Advent Wreath?

During Advent we light candles on an Advent wreath, because candles remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. God came to us in Jesus — like a beautiful light, filling our world with forgiveness and peace. As the light from our Advent wreath grows brighter week by week, we are reminded of God's gift of light, and we hear God asking us to reflect that light in our lives.

December Sunday School Schedule

Sunday, Dec. 2

- **Grades 1-6:** Advent Program rehearsal in Room 307.
- **3-year-olds - Kindergarten:** Jesus Is Born (Luke 2:1-20); Advent Program rehearsal for part of session in Room 7 and in the Sanctuary.

Sunday, Dec. 9

- **Grades 1-6:** Advent Program rehearsal in Room 307.
- **3-year olds - Kindergarten:** Advent Program rehearsal in Room 7 and in the Sanctuary.

Saturday, Dec. 15

- **9 to 11 a.m.:** Advent Program dress rehearsal in the Sanctuary (Grades 1-6 ONLY).

Sunday, Dec. 16

- **10 a.m.:** Advent Program in the Sanctuary (ALL Sunday School classes will meet in the Chapel to warm up at 9:30 a.m.).

Sunday, Dec. 23 & Dec. 30

- **No Sunday School**



Youth Ministries

Save the Date for AUCTION!!!

Please set aside Friday, Feb. 22, 2013, for St. John's fifth annual youth fundraising auction and dinner, called A Red Carpet Affair, which will be held from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Forte, 615 Third St., Des Moines. Wear your fanciest outfit and walk the red carpet to help St. John's Youth!

The funds raised will help confirmation students participate in a service trip to Duluth, MN, and high-school youth to take a service trip to San Francisco in the summer of 2013.

While we would have liked to go back to the State Historical Museum, the arrangement we received last March is no longer available. After much discussion, it was decided to stay downtown and move the event to Forte. Cost for the space is minimal, and we will continue to have the meal provided by Barratta's restaurant.

That being said, we need donations of items or services to auction off! We have a silent auction and a live auction. We are looking for themed gift baskets, tickets to events, original artwork, etc. Do you have a cabin or condo where a couple could spend a weekend or longer? Are you a wonderful cook? You could donate a meal for a set number of people at your home. Do you have season tickets to a sporting or arts event and have a set that you may not be able to use? We will take them off your hands! Do you have a skill that you could teach people (i.e. how to brew beer, how to make bread or pie, how to knit, how to play piano)? We would love to auction off lessons for your talent! Do you have connections? Can you call in a favor and get us some sweet things to donate? Please do! ☺

Please email the auction committee with anything you are willing to donate! If you want to donate something, but do not know what to offer, we can help. Just contact Megan Clausen at meganc@stjohnsdsm.org or the auction committee at sjlyouthdsm@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, Dec. 8: All students in Grades 7-12 may participate in this service project. Meet at the church at 9 a.m. and assemble care packages for some very important people! Then we will deliver them. We will end up back at church to eat lunch together and play some games! You won't want to miss it! We need five to six adults to go with us, so if you are willing please let Megan Clausen know ASAP! To sign up or to be an adult volunteer, contact Megan Clausen at meganc@stjohnsdsm.org.

Sunday, Dec. 9: All high-school students are invited to go to SkyZone in Grimes to have some fun with the youth of St. James Lutheran Church in Johnston! Then we will head to St. James for some pizza. We ask that you bring \$15 to cover the cost of SkyZone and 2.5 yards of two coordinating pieces of fleece. We will be making fleece tie blankets for students who are about to age out of the foster-care system. How awesome it would be if EVERYONE made a blanket or two! Details to come by email and Facebook! Or, if you have questions, contact Megan Clausen at meganc@stjohnsdsm.org.

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Sign Up for Service Trips ASAP!

The deadline to sign up for summer service trips is Sunday, Jan. 6. If you would like to go to Duluth, MN (July 14 - 19 for Grades 7-8), you need to pay a \$100 deposit. If you would like to go to San Francisco, CA (July 24 - Aug. 2 or 3 for Grades 9-12), you need to pay a \$200 deposit by the deadline mentioned above. Spots are going quickly and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis! There are 12 spots available for Duluth and 16 spots available for San Francisco! More details to come by email! But, if you have questions, contact Megan Clausen at meganc@stjohnsdsm.org.

In the City (and World) for Good!

Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they need your hearts to love them. So, spread your love everywhere you go. Mother Teresa

There are so many ways to give your heart to the city and the world through God's mission for St. John's! Please note the opportunities for "spread(ing) your love" in partnership with members and friends of St. John's.

We have made some changes to the way we prepare and serve on the 18th and 19th of every month at Central Iowa Shelter and Services. Due to the increased capacity at the new facility, we now serve approximately 200 people both evenings. Please note that the sign-up sheets in the Narthex have been remodeled and that we are now asking for cash donations for the main entrée – which will be prepared at the shelter every time we serve. Feel free to invite friends, who may have a heart for this ministry, to participate as well! And thanks for your steady commitment to CISS!

The Connection Café is another meal ministry we participate in with the other three churches of the Bridge. Again this year, St. John's will help provide Christmas gifts for some of the Café guests. You will find gift suggestions on the tree in the Fireside Lounge, beginning Dec. 1-2. You may take a tag, purchase the suggested item, attach the tag to the outside of the wrapped gift, and bring it back to the tree by Dec. 20.

Our other opportunity to remember our neighbors with Christmas gifts is through the Interfaith Hospitality Network. We will adopt two families through IHN again this year, and put gift suggestions on the tree in the Fireside Lounge as described above... And speaking of IHN, please note the article elsewhere in this *Eagle Call* regarding our next opportunity to support Windsor Heights Lutheran in hosting IHN families on **Jan. 8 and Jan. 10, 2013.**

The ELCA has a well-organized and "long-haul" disaster response program for those affected by Hurricane Sandy on the east coast. Cash donations are the best way to support the ELCA's relief work at this time, and 100 percent of every dollar given goes to help those in need. Donations can be made through St. John's, marked "ELCA disaster response," or through the ELCA website at www.elca.org.

Finally, a photo of our four Johanna Scholarship students at Usangi Leadership and Training College in our Companion Synod and a short report from Judi Langholz, member of the Board of Directors of ULTC are also printed in this *Eagle Call*. This is yet another opportunity for sharing.

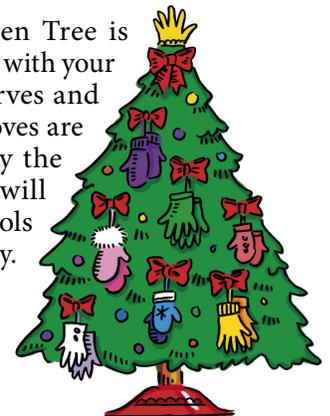
Service for Peace**Ecumenical Peace Service
Prayer Service to be Held at First Christian**

The D.M. Area Ecumenical Committee for Peace will hold an ecumenical prayer service Friday, Dec. 28, at 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, 2500 University in Des Moines. This year's theme is "Peace in the Heart." Organizers of this event, which is open to the public, will "lament the terrible losses of war, pray for peace, and recommit ourselves to the cause of peacemaking in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and worldwide."

According to a press release, the service will emphasize how all children need peace. It will be held on the occasion of the "Feast of the Holy Innocents," which commemorates the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem recounted in the Book of Matthew, 2:16-18: "When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'"

Mitten Tree

The St. John's Mitten Tree is ready to be decorated with your gloves, mittens, scarves and hats. Adult men's gloves are especially needed by the shelters. Donations will be delivered to schools and shelters in January.



Arts Ministries

Handbell Choirs Need Your Help

Hopefully, many of you have had the chance to hear the adult, high school or children's bell choirs perform in the past few months. All are new this year and are under the direction of our new Fine Arts Director Beth Ann Edwards.

The **ARTS** at
ST. JOHN'S



It has been exciting to have 45 members of our congregation step forth to be part of this new worship ministry. Mirroring our beautiful – but aging – building, the 30- to 50-year-old set we own is in various stages of disrepair and deterioration. We are using borrowed bells in place of St. John's bells that need repair. To be truly serviceable, and to sustain this growing ministry, the bells are long overdue for their "100,000-mile overhaul." This will cost about \$10,000 for the 61 bells and their cases. Replacement cost of our handbells would be about \$24,000.

Since there is no funding available in the church operating budget or the Foundation budget, the bell choirs themselves are beginning a fundraising campaign over the next several months to repair and restore as many bells as we can. During the month of December, look for our ringers in the narthex between services; you will have the opportunity to adopt your very own bell and sponsor its repair. Every dollar received will receive a 50 percent match from an anonymous donor, so your monetary support will add up in a hurry.

Stop by and visit with our ringers when you hear their melodious notes!

Midweek Music Schedule for December

The Midweek Music Series, sponsored by the Arts at St. John's, presents concerts in the Sanctuary each Wednesday at 12:05 p.m., followed by a light lunch in Weertz Hall downstairs. The concerts are free and open to the public. The lunches cost \$6 per person.

- **Dec. 5** Barbara Martin, mezzo-soprano, and Bruce Martin, piano
- **Dec. 12** Scott Davis Brass Quintet
- **Dec. 19** Christmas at St. John's

Artist of the Month: *Little Faces of St. John's*

December's Artist of the Month exhibit is all about St. John's! Megan Clausen, with assistance from Jacque Warming, has photographed children in our St. John's family and prepared a delightful exhibit that is sure to bring smiles to all. Please take a few minutes to look at our future church leaders, committee members, musicians and keepers of the faith.



The St. John's Choir, Drake String Ensemble and St. John's professional instrumental ensemble presented a concert of music by Bach (Magnificat in D) and Mozart (Divertimento in D Major) on Saturday evening, Nov. 17. This event, performed in front of a full house, was sponsored by the Friends of the Arts at St. John's.

Hospitality & Outreach



The Kindness of Strangers

As you may know, St. John's employees take turns offering devotions at our weekly staff meetings. Sometimes the topic is serious, sometimes light with a bit of humor, sometimes scripturally-based and prayerful. One of my favorite resources is a book by the Rev. Peter J. Gomes, an American Baptist minister with an impressive résumé. The majority of his years of ministry (beginning in the late 1960s) were during very turbulent decades within our country. His outlook now seems miles ahead of where we were as a country, and as Christians, at that time. He died at the age of 68 in 2011.

Of course, being raised a good Catholic, I had never heard of him. But I'm so glad I found his book, *Sermons: Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living*. The book is hailed as "The Best Sermons of a Great American Preacher."

Recently, I read his sermon, *The Kindness of Strangers*. (Take note of the title of this article ... original, aren't I?) Pastor Gomes takes a new approach to the story of the Good Samaritan, a text with which we all are familiar. Short of copying his entire sermon, which would violate all kinds of copyright laws, plus take up more space than I'm allowed, I wish to share some insights.

When Jesus relates this story, he refers to the Good Samaritan as "the one who showed mercy" and asks us to do the same to all whom we encounter. Pastor Gomes notes that he finds the use of the word *mercy* an interesting choice. Synonyms for *mercy* are: clemency, understanding, forgiveness, sympathy and pity, among others. *Mercy* intimates an unwarranted kindness, a gift that is unearned, something that is more than justice necessitates.

In this historical time-frame, a Samaritan would never have been expected to extend compassion to a Jew, his sworn enemy. A Samaritan was a foreigner in Israel and had no obligation to show kindness. The Samaritan, therefore, acted against what was universally accepted and expected. He chose mercy.

Gomes makes the point that the victim is totally vulnerable to the Samaritan, who literally has in his hands the power of life and death. To a Samaritan of that time, one less Jew would be a good thing. Gomes states we can relate the comparison in today's world to Arabs and Jews or Democrats and Republicans (particularly prophetic as this book was written 14 years ago). Simply put, "it is the power of those oppressed to show mercy, not justice, to their oppressors." The ultimate manifestation of control and dominance is to show mercy, to do more than justice requires.

Gomes continues to instruct, enlighten and offer more insights to this passage, but ultimately points out that the story Jesus relates is in response to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" This followed the question from the lawyer as to what was necessary for eternal life. The response from Jesus recounts the Mosaic summary of the law to love God and your neighbor as yourself. Okay, God is easily defined, or at least He was to the scribes and legalists of that time period. But, who is our neighbor?

Jesus asks us to expand our horizons and not classify our neighbor too narrowly. Our neighbor is NOT merely someone in our immediate residential area, nor a person with whom we work, worship or play, nor the individual who happens to look and/or dress similarly. Our neighbors are everyone, including – and maybe especially – those with different beliefs, ideas, looks, social or economic standing or ideas.

By showing mercy to all our neighbors, we extend God's love and presence among us. We make real God's love and free ourselves from our own limited restraints. So when the opportunity presents itself to serve, to provide, to care, please don't hesitate. Don't see with narrow blinders; see with the vision God gives us.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:1-2

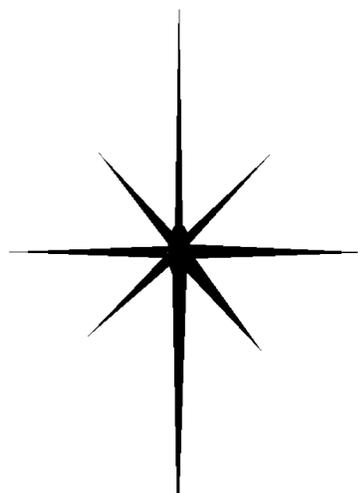
Thrivent Choice Dollars

Important notice for all Thrivent Policy Holders: If you have received notice that you have Choice Dollars to spend consider directing Thrivent to allocate them to St. John's. The congregational council will be able to use them to fulfill God's mission in this place. Last year's Choice Dollars were used to fund the St. John's van ministry providing transportation to worship for folks who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend; funding the Beloved Community so that everyone could come on Wednesday evenings for a free meal and building community; and to assist in funding St. John's Fine Arts programming. The congregational council has the authority to decide where the Choice Dollars are used. If you have a preference, speak to a member of the council.

Don't put off doing this since it is a requirement that you designate; otherwise the dollars St. John's would get to enhance its ministry will be lost. Last year St. John's received around \$8,000 from Thrivent. If everyone who had Choice Dollars to spend designated that they be allocated to St. John's we would receive an estimated \$20,000.

Make it a priority today to visit Thrivent at Thrivent.com/choicedollars or call 800-847-4836 and ask them to allocate your Choice Dollars to St. John's Lutheran Church, Des Moines, Iowa.

December 2012
Volume 44, No. 12



Prepare the Way

Isaiah 40:3

An Advent evening of rest, renewal, and preparation

Thursday, December 6, 2012 at 7:00 pm
St. John's Lutheran Church, 6th. Ave. and Watson Powell
Sanctuary and Fireside Lounge

JANUARY EAGLE CALL DEADLINE

The deadline for all
Eagle Call information
is **Monday, Dec. 17.**

Please send information
or articles in digital
format, to Scott LaBlanc,
scottl@stjohnsdsm.org.

If you cannot send it by
e-mail, drop it off at the
church office.

Thank you!